

INCARNATION OF FAITH AND WILL

Notes of Ri In Mo, Former War Correspondent
of the Korean People's Army

Career of Ri In Mo

Was born in Naejung-ri, Ansan Sub-County, Phungsan County, South Hamgyong Province (today's Naejung-ri, Kim Hyong Gwon County, Ryanggang Province) on October 10, 1917.

Received primary and secondary education at home and abroad and took part in anti-Japanese patriotic movement in his boyhood.

Was appointed propaganda department head of the Phungsan County Party Committee and then that of the Hungnam City Party Committee after liberation of the country from Japanese colonial rule on August 15, 1945. Married Kim Sun Im in 1948.

Took part in the Fatherland Liberation War as a war correspondent under the Culture Department of the Korean People's Army after the outbreak of the war on June 25, 1950. Went to the Jiri Mountains with the beginning of the temporary strategic retreat of the People's Army in September that year and took charge of the issue of newspaper at the propaganda department of the South Kyongsang Provincial Party Committee.

Was wounded and taken prisoner in Taesong Valley of the Jiri Mountains in January 1952. Was sentenced to seven years' imprisonment and was released from prison in January 1959 after completion of his prison term. Was thrown in prison again, sentenced to 15 years' imprisonment on "charge" of violation of the "National Security Law" in June 1961.

Although his prison term expired in 1976, he was kept in Chongju Preventive Custody House under the name of "preventive custody" under the "Public Security Law" as he was an unconverted offender and was released from it in October 1988.

Lived with farmer Kim Sang Won under his care in Sinyong-ri, Jinyong Township, Kimhae County, South Kyongsang Province and was repatriated to the northern half of the Republic on March 19, 1993.

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of the Korean People's Army**

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Ri In Mo has a moving reunion with his family at Phanmunjom after 43 years' interval





A leading state functionary meets and conveys him the compliments and congratulations of President Kim Il Sung and Comrade Kim Jong Il at Phanmunjom

Ri In Mo, feeble and inarticulate, finds it difficult to swallow the gruel fed by his wife



Hundreds of thousands of people warmly welcome Ri In Mo returning to the fold of the motherland on the road leading from Kaesong to Pyongyang





At Phanmunjom Ri In Mo's family meet Kim Sang Won and his wife who took care of Ri In Mo



Ri In Mo's mother Kim Kye Sun at her sixtieth birthday table

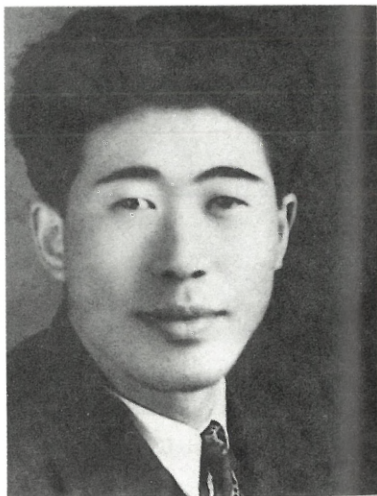


Ri In Mo and Kim Sun Im at the wedding in 1948

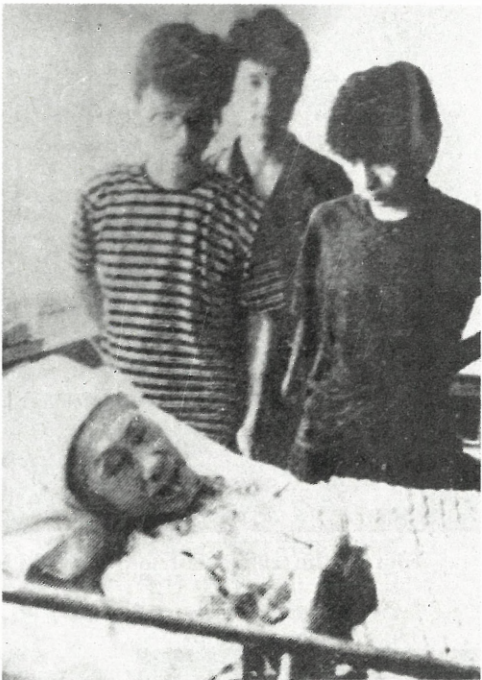


**Ri In Mo disabled by torture
of the south Korean police
takes an airing with Kim
Sang Won's help**

Ri In Mo in his youth



**Students in Pusan call on
Ri In Mo in hospital**



**Kim Sun Im writes a letter to an international
human rights organization in demand of repa-
triation of her husband
from south Korea**





Kim Sun Im telling her family about Ri In Mo's patriotic activity



Ri In Mo with Kim Sang Won and his family

Foreword

Notes of Ri In Mo, former KPA war correspondent, an iron-willed just man known as an eternal bird in the present world community, were published in pamphlet form by the magazine *Mal* Publishing House in south Korea in August last year.

Ri In Mo was taken prisoner while active as a war correspondent in the Fatherland Liberation War (June 25, 1950-July 27, 1953); he was crippled, having been imprisoned for 34 years in south Korea. He, 76 years old, and unhealthy, was repatriated to the northern half of the Republic in mid-March this year and had a dramatic reunion with his wife and daughter.

The editorial board is publishing, in translation, excerpts of *Notes of a Former War Correspondent of the Korean People's Army*, under the heading reflecting his fortitude, that were published in south Korea.

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1. The Last Notes from an Old War Correspondent's Notebook

The 27th of October, 1988 is an unforgettable day.

The door of my cell No. 18 in building No. 3 of the Chongju Preventive Custody House was jerked open abruptly at dawn that day—it was hard to guess the time, the sun of late autumn had not risen yet.

“No. 94, come out! It's time for the check of cell!” the jailer shouted.

The term “check of cell,” which was used in prison, meant checking the prisoners' cells and belongings.

I was taken to the instruction section chief. I had no idea of the surprise awaiting me. I was to be released from the Chongju Preventive Custody House that day, he told me. He explained that for me the preventive custody under the “Public Security Law” had been altered to “limitation of my residence”.

I was shocked at the news. I had been under preventive custody for nearly 12 years in Chongju. I've been in prison for 34 years all in all, if the period of my previous imprisonment is added. The jailer brought my belongings, after having examined them, and the uniform-like working clothes to change into.

A short while later two police investigators arrived to take me to the old folk's home where I was to live. I followed them and got into the van they had brought. It started moving and passed through the prison gate

before I realized it. I was so dazzled by the sunlight entering the car window that I could hardly open my eyes. The cell had had hardly any sunlight. Thoughts thronged my mind: When would other comrades be released? How long would I be kept under surveillance under the plea of "limitation of residence"? Would it not be better for me, an old, sick man, to die rather than live, giving strangers trouble in the land where I have no kin? When could I meet my comrades?...

In the meantime we had arrived at the old folk's home run by the Salvation Army at Kwachon, a city of Kyonggi Province.

After brief formalities, a girl of the general affairs department of the home took me to a room. I was told the room would be shared by four men, but none were there now, presumably because it was daytime.

I suddenly felt exhausted and, leaning against the wall, gazed at the distant mountains through the window; then the door of the room drew my eye. I sprang to my feet, opened the door and stepped out into the corridor.

I thought: the door was not locked, I opened it myself and left the room....

Of course, I had not thought that the door would be locked, but when I opened it with my own hand after a 34-year interval, and stepped out of the room, I was so thrilled that my whole body trembled.

I returned to the room, sat down and closed my eyes. My head seemed empty, but then a woman's face rose in my mind's eye. She wore a smart Korean coat, her hair was parted in the middle, and her face had an inscrutable expression, no matter if she were

smiling or sobbing. It was the face of my mother. In July 1950 when I left for the front my mother had seen me off with just such an expression, unable to show tears or a smile.

Alas, Mother, I failed to set the table for your 60th birthday or attend you on your deathbed. Your son, aged 72 and grey-haired, had just been released from prison.

This thought brought a lump to my throat. If a blood vessel in my brain had ruptured and I became paralyzed on one side—I pursued the thought I had conceived in the van in the morning—it would be more correct to commit suicide than to be a shameful burden to strangers.

What would my task be before that? I thought.

I noticed a ball-pen in a corner of the room. I quickly went over and grabbed it, afraid that some one might take it away from me.

Prison authorities do not provide prisoners with writing paper or pens.

Someone, naturally, could ask what would I do with a pen if I had one.

Of course I, an ordinary man, would not keep a diary or write a biography, and even if I did such a thing, what good would it be? However, I wanted to record the heroic deeds of many comrades that I had witnessed and covered as a war correspondent.

During the 34 years of my imprisonment, night and day I would recall what I had seen and heard in the Jiri Mountains, so that I would not forget them.

Fingering the pen, I made up my mind to commit my memories to paper as soon as possible. To write a story about the youth, the struggle and patriotism of

my comrades who had laid down their lives in battle in the mountains, shouting, "Long live reunification of the country!" and to convey it to posterity—this was, I thought, the last duty of a war correspondent of the People's Army who had but a few years left to live.

For several months I kept writing when my elderly room-mates went out.

In addition to the struggle of the guerrillas on the Jiri Mountains, I wrote about the anti-Japanese struggle during the Japanese imperialist rule and the wretched plight of Leftist prisoners after the 1950s that I had seen with my own eyes. When I got down to writing I found my memory had dimmed about many things. So, in the beginning, I wrote only about what I clearly remembered.

When the monthly magazine *Mal* asked permission to publish my notes, I gladly consented. I am sorry that I left out many things of which I had but a faint memory. Even after the article entitled *Notes of a Former War Correspondent of the People's Army* was printed in four issues of *Mal* from October 1989 to January 1990, I jotted down more and more memories from time to time. I supplemented parts of the account by making inquiries among my comrades who had been released from the preventive custody house.

I have been anxious to supplement my notes. With the help of Sin Jun Yong, a *Mal* journalist, I managed to put together what I had written so far. It became lengthy enough to be put out as a pamphlet.

I am very indebted to the kindhearted readers of my article in *Mal* for 1989. I am much obliged to Mr. Kim Sang Won and his wife, who took me into

their family and are taking care of me, to those who conveyed news of my precious mother, my wife and daughter, and to many other people who are making sincere efforts for my return to my native parts. On the other hand, I am sorry that other comrades in the same plight have yet no tidings of their home.

I should like to dedicate these notes to my late comrades and many benefactors, to the Motherland and the nation. I dedicate my notes, as a tribute of apology, to my wife who has been leading a lonely life because of me.

2. A “Young Revolutionary” on Kaema Plateau

I was born in a village called Yo-ogol in Hagoso Sub-County, Pukchong County, South Hamgyong Province.

My father died suddenly, in less than a year after marriage. Seven months later I was born, as the posthumous only son, on October 10, 1917.

Therefore, my mother was widowed at the age of 18 and her only hope lay in her newly-born son.

After several years my aunt also died of illness, so that my mother, as the second daughter-in-law, took her place as the mistress of the poor family. She had to lead a hard life, shouldering the heavy household burden and taking care of my three cousins besides myself.

My mother must have taken great pains in such straitened circumstances to bring me up and my three cousins without being suspected of discriminating them. Her idea was to send me to my childless maternal uncle.

My mother grieved even after sending me there and visited my maternal uncle now and then just to see me. As I remember, she hesitated to embrace me as she would have liked and feigned indifference in the presence of my childless aunt who looked after me like her own son.

When I reached school age I was admitted to Phabal Primary School in Phungsan Sub-County.

There was a certain Mr. Jong in our village who was older than me and my classmates. After leaving Phabal Primary School he attended Pukchong Agricultural School. Towards that time he was expelled for joining a strike at school and returned to his home in Phungsan Sub-County. In the evenings he would gather young boys of my age and instil anti-Japanese patriotism in them.

At lunchtime, one July day in 1930, my aunt, giving me a large brass bowl and a *5-jon* coin, told me to buy some noodles for lunch as there was nothing to eat in the house.

On passing through the gate, with the bowl and money in my hand, I heard a shot from the direction of the police substation, some 13-14 houses away from ours. Looking towards the substation, I saw several people in the road in front of it and others peeping inquisitively from their doors. Something serious has happened, I thought.

Quite excited, I flung the brass bowl and money

back into the house, and dashed towards the police sub-station. Boys of my age and grown-ups—about 30 in all—had gathered there.

Surrounded by the crowd were three authoritative-looking men in hemp knee-breaches and straw-sandals, their hair combed back—this was called a socialist-style hair at the time—and with Mausers in their hands and a Korean policeman on his knees begging them for mercy, bowing repeatedly to the ground and rubbing his hands.

The Japanese police chief lay bleeding in front of his desk in the police substation. I shuddered at the sight. This wicked Japanese police chief Matsuyama had harassed Koreans so much that he had been dubbed “Oppasi” (wasp).

A nice-looking man of the three looking down at the Korean policeman pleading for his life, seemed to be their chief. He said:

“You and your like, though Koreans, act as henchmen of the Japanese imperialists invading Korea, and deserve to be shot immediately. But we’ll spare your life because you’re a Korean and our compatriot. Stop working as a policeman. Go home and farm. And prove yourself a worthy Korean.”

On hearing this, the policeman said, kowtowing, “Yes, yes. Thank you. I’ll stop working as a policeman at once and go home and lead a clean life.”

At the same time Oppasi’s wife, her hair dishevelled and wearing only a gown, was seen slipping barefooted out of her house. Seeing one of the men aiming his gun at her, the captain stopped him, saying:

“No! Don’t fire! What good is it to shoot a woman like that?”

The man lowered his gun. Children's cries could be heard from the house.

The three men whispered among themselves, then two of them walked off down the road and the third who had talked to the policeman, addressed the crowd:

"Brothers and sisters, we are from the anti-Japanese armed unit active on Mt. Paektu, fighting to drive the Japanese out and win back our country. We are going to support the patriotic struggle of the peasants in Tanchon with arms as they are fighting empty-handed and bleeding against the armed Japanese."

After that incident my friends and I went to Mr. Jong's house. We were anxious to know about the armed unit on Mt. Paektu. He told us many stories:

"The men who shot the policeman the other day are from the Kim Hyong Gwon-led troop active in the Mt. Paektu area. A big incident took place in Tanchon, South Hamgyong Province. A forest ranger, a cat's paw of the Japanese, detaining an innocent peasant, gave him a sound thrashing. Enraged, the peasants crowded into the county government office and police station and destroyed them. Many were killed by the Japanese. Now a peasant's union is being organized in Tanchon. The Kim Hyong Gwon-led unit was on its way to Tanchon to help the peasants fighting with their hoes against the Japanese who are armed to the teeth."

Our senior Mr. Jong also told us about the Wonsan General Strike and the Kwangju Students' Movement which took place in the year 1929. We clenched our small fists while we listened.

“Our Korean nation is fighting, not dead. Armed troops in the mountains, workers with hammers in their hands at factories and farmers with hoes in rural areas are fighting against the Japanese. At school students are staging demonstrations and strikes, aren’t they? If we continue to fight in this way our nation surely will win independence.”

When I lay down to sleep at home that night, Mr. Jong’s voice was still ringing in my ears:

“The Korean nation is not dead. It is alive and fighting....”

My young heart was throbbing with excitement. The sturdy man, aiming his gun, from the armed troop active on Mt. Paektu, rose in my mind’s eye.

The 1930s were years when more than half of the Korean peasants, affected by the world economic crisis, kept alive by eating pine-tree bark in spring. To make matters worse, the urban workers, who had lost their jobs due to the crisis, made for the villages. As a result, the number of peasants short of food in spring increased with each passing day.

Peasants in dire need, risking their lives, often fought against policemen because of the farm rent. The Japanese police, from 1930, made sweeping roundups here and there without letup, trying to suppress the revolutionary peasant’s union movement, which was spreading across the country. In 1932 whirlwind arrests swept Phungsan, my native area.

I was then only 16, so I thought they would not arrest me. But at midnight six Japanese policemen raided my mother’s old home. They seized me and ransacked the house. When a police detective, look-

ing suspiciously up at the newly-papered ceiling, poked it with his stick, books on social science fell down from it.

After binding the books up, they took me away.

About 20 men were arrested in the seat of the sub-county and more in the villages.

They were interrogated and tortured through beatings and by pouring water into their mouths for a month and a half before most of them were released. Three my seniors and I were let off some days later.

3. A Wandering Young Man in Colony

After my release from prison, I was admitted to Changbai County-run Secondary School, China, where one of my maternal uncle's bosom friends taught.

The Japanese were just as outrageous in Changbai County as they were in Korea. Behaving as if they were the masters of Manchuria, they had seized the forests, to say nothing of the fertile land, and exploited and ill-treated the poor Chinese and my Korean compatriots. As their outrages were getting more and more on my nerves with every day, the urge to fight against Japanese imperialism haunted me.

At the time not a day passed without armed clashes with the Japanese in the areas bordering on Manchuria.

I made up my mind to join the anti-Japanese armed guerrillas. There was a Korean village at remote Erdaogang, 48 to 52 kilometres from the seat of the Changbai County office. I had heard that if I went there an opportunity could arise for me to join the anti-Japanese armed guerrillas, so I went every Sunday, but my efforts were in vain.

In the early days of my stay in Changbai County I thought that things would probably be better there as it was a foreign land. But that was a naive thought. I was summoned by the Japanese Consulate or they came to meet me no less frequently than in my home village. On the third year of my stay in Changbai County I moved to Longjing where I became a student of Tonghung Secondary School.

But Longjing was not a safe zone for me either. Information was swift in coming: I had just about settled down when I was sent for by the Japanese Consulate in Longjing and interrogated as to why I had come there. Although I was only attending the school there, I was not free.

Then I received a letter from a village friend who was studying in Seoul. He wrote that I should come there. I left immediately for Seoul.

Upon my arrival, my friend introduced me to one man. But I could not feel friendly towards him. He was also from my village. When we had been bustling about as young fighters he was a student of Pukkyongsong Secondary School of North Hamgyong Province. His father, a capitalist, was always mixing in with the Japanese imperialists and was close to them. Moreover, during his summer vacation back home, he gave himself such airs that none of us were on friend-

ly terms with him. Later he graduated from the Law College of Kyongsong (Keijo Hosen) and got a job as a social-news reporter of *Maeil Sinmun*, the organ of the Government-General of Korea.

I had been introduced to a man whom I had thought not a comrade but a target in struggle after I had made a thousand-*ri*-long way from Longjing, with my heart so full of bright hopes. I was very dissatisfied secretly but I had to endure silently.

Quite upset, I blew up before my friend and told him that instead of dallying away my time there I would go to Tokyo and complete my academic studies. My friend was silent. I then wrote to some friends from my village in Tokyo. A reply soon came, with the promise that they would come for me.

As expected, after a month or so, a friend of mine arrived in Seoul. I set out for Tokyo in the student's uniform he had brought, without a passport for traveling.

When I arrived in Japan the matriculation examinations were over at all schools, with the exception of Tokyo Technical College. I applied for it, without little hope for success; I was lucky to pass the exams and became a student.

As for police surveillance, there was no land of liberty for people of a colony. In Tokyo, too, the detectives of the Korean section of the Metropolitan Police Headquarters, whose job it was to keep a close watch on Koreans, frequented our hostels.

Meanwhile, it was said that the policeman, who had tailed me in my native town, Phungsan, had been punished with a wage cut on the charge of having lost sight of my whereabouts.

One day word came that my mother was seriously ill. It made me restless to think of whether she could afford a bowl of water when she wanted one. But it was also uncertain whether I could stay at my sick mother's side if I returned home.

Seeing that I was wavering, Ri Si Ho said that perhaps he should go to my home in my stead.

Eventually it was decided that he would go. My mother had had typhoid fever but had been restored to health, thanks to Mr. Ri's kind care. But he contracted typhoid while tending her. At this news, I felt very sad and prayed he would recover. Unfortunately, he passed away in the spring of his life, in my mother's bed. It was I, therefore, who had caused his death. "Si Ho, I'll carry on with your share." That was all I could say.

In 1940 I went back to Seoul, willingly giving up my four years of life in Tokyo.

In 1943 I returned to Phungsan from Seoul.

In June 1945, the Japanese imperialists, on the eve of their fall, were desperately suppressing the people.

I hid myself temporarily deep in the mountains. I spent about two months or so like an owl rolling in a bed of dried grass set between rocks and eating potatoes and salt. One day comrades rushed up and told me that Korea was liberated.

What excitement! Tears streaming down their cheeks, my comrades ran wild across the Kaema Plateau, looking no better than wild animals! Who could have guessed that the Motherland would be torn into two as we see it today?

4. Liberation, Building a New Country and Marriage

I was back home to find my friends waiting for my return. Taking advantage of the vacuum of security in the wake of the surrender of the Japanese imperialists, influential wealthy folk and loafers, as well as stooges under Japanese imperialist rule, were in command of all the affairs in their favour. Particularly, the son of the dignitary of our village, a graduate of the Tokyo Imperial University, had formed an armed gang of the Japanese running dogs and occupied the police substation and sub-county office, crying for maintenance of security.

We gathered to discuss what we had to do in the future under the circumstances. We were of one opinion that we should drive them out but the question was how to do it. The opinion was raised that they should be driven out by the united force of the masses, not only through our efforts. All agreed on this. We left to begin organizational work. It was agreed to hold a mass meeting in the township in a month and a half.

What a surprise the meeting was! The peasants, who looked so simple and who were so taciturn before, vehemently condemned the traitorous acts of the landlords and pro-Japanese elements. The landlords and former Japanese stooges, who gave them-

selves airs previously, sought loopholes.

I realized from the mass meeting how correctly the people appreciated what was going on in the world and how great their united force was. I had learned much from the peasants of my township; I never forgot that long.

Now I should like to dwell on my wife.

After my marriage in 1948, my wife lived happily with me for only two years and the following 42 years—in solitude. But it was she who came to my rescue and encouraged me when I was on the brink of death in the mountains and in prison.

She had studied medicine in Seoul as a woman of Phungsan. I was in Seoul in 1940 when I met her twice as someone from my native township. At that time I got the impression that she was an artist rather than a physician.

After liberation she returned home, boldly giving up the medical college which she said she had chosen at her parents' advice. From then on she supported us in our activity and energetically took part in it. Then she applied for membership to the Party and by chance her first examiner was me, if my memory serves me right. I was pleased with her growing to be a revolutionary and gladly gave her good recommendations.

In 1948, I was transferred from the Phungsan County Party Committee to the Hungnam City Party Committee. I also headed the propaganda section in my new post.

5. Young Fighters of the Jiri Mountains

The war broke out. All forces were mobilized from the building of a new country to the front for victory in the war. The propaganda personnel were no exception. I, too, was called up to the Party Central Committee before I left for the front.

I left home for Pyongyang on the morning of July 23, 1950. While I was lacing my shoes at the entrance, my wife wept by the door, holding our 2-year old daughter Hyon Ok in her arms. She followed me to the gate, wiping her tears away. I bowed to my mother who was standing at the entrance, and in an undertone said to my wife what I had wanted to tell her before:

“If I fail to return, you must not remain a widow to follow my mother’s fate. You must marry some kind-hearted man without fail.”

I said this straight from the heart. Anyone who knows the sorrows of a mother, dutiful to her deceased husband after she had been widowed so young, would have said the same thing, I think.

“Don’t talk to me like that!”

Tears streamed down her cheeks again.

“I know you will miss me wherever you go, so I’ll never forget you.”

Forty years have passed since that day of my departure.

Upon arrival at Pyongyang I went to the Party Central Committee where I was assigned to the Cultural Department of the People's Army. As a war correspondent of the cultural department, I left for the front.

A war correspondent should always be on the fighting line during a war. I headed for Jinju of South Kyongsang Province. The battle line was there at the time.

The rural committee in every village of Jinju was pushing ahead with the agrarian reform under the guidance of the people's committee. The agrarian reform, through confiscation without compensation and free distribution of land, was one of the most important events in the liberated areas. It was an important source of my news coverage.

Looking at the peasants working actively on the rural committees in the villages in and around Jinju, I recalled the simple farmers of my hometown who had rejoiced so at the agrarian reform in my native village of Phungsan five years earlier.

On September 15, 1950 American troops landed in Inchon. This toppled the balance of forces on the line of the river Rakdong, so that the People's Army began to retreat.

I had two alternatives in these circumstances: should I go north, across the Thaebaek Mountains, or should I remain in the south to take part in guerrilla warfare?

Frankly speaking, I was eager to go to the north, and I was longing to see my mother and wife. But I could not choose the former. America had now cut our country in half. Neither independence nor national

reunification could be mentioned unless the foreign forces were driven out. I knew that with the start of retreat the South Kyongsang Provincial Party Committee and other organs were going into the mountains.

"I am 34 years old. I will now take up arms instead of my pen," I concluded. I parted from the retreating unit and went off into the Jiri Mountains alone.

At first I went to Sedong village in Machon Sub-County, Hamyang County where the South Kyongsang Provincial Party Committee was located.

The provincial Party committee was selecting people to form a guerrilla unit under its command. The selection committee examined volunteers one by one, and I was rejected as not being physically fit. Though I pleaded with the committee head, he was stubborn. I was ashamed of myself and very sorry.

Rejected, I felt a strong desire to go north. Seated beside a rock and looking up at the night sky of my Homeland, I calmed down and decided to go to the county Party committees the next day, since they were also selecting people for guerrilla units. The following day, I learned that the Jinyang County Party Committee had moved to the valley of the Taewon Temple. I went in search of it.

Across the Ssukpat Pass I climbed down in the direction of the Taewon Temple, where I met some young people looking after about 20 cows. They told me that they belonged to the Jinyang County Party Committee. They explained that the People's Army men in the Sachon and Kosong areas had found the cows grazing in the field without cowherds, so that was why they carried their ammunition on their backs.

The mountain path being rocky and steep from there, the KPA soldiers had requested before they departed to return the cows to their owners. They added that the county Party committee had moved about 8 km from the Taewon Temple.

After an 8-kilometre walk from there, I reached the Jinyang County Party Committee. I met the chairman of the committee and told him frankly that I had been rejected from the selection. I asked him to accept me into the guerrilla unit directed by the county Party committee. He told me that I was to go to the kitchen for a meal first.

After I had eaten, I was called to the chairman. He said, "We are moving to Phyongchon village so I'd like you to look after the cattle here." He explained that as it was impossible to find the owners of the cows in Sachon and Kosong, he was thinking of distributing them to peasants without any cattle and that it would be my task to look after them until then.

Soon the county Party committee shifted to the village, leaving us behind in the mountains--two people and I hailing from north Korea and a few of the locals.

Anyone who has experienced mountain life would know that solitary life in the mountains makes one long for a lively village. Though I had stayed in the south to devote myself to the struggle for national reunification, suppressing the desire to see my family, they gave me the job of a cowherd.... I blush to confess that I began to waver. I had spent two sad days thus when the chief of the propaganda department of the Jinyang County Party Committee came to us from the village and said, "I'm sorry for having detained

you here. The chairman has given instruction, so let's now go down to the village."

Thus my job as a cowherd ended.

The next day I was told that the Jinyang County Party Committee was leaving for Un-ri, Tansong Sub-County, Sanchong County, and I followed it. At that time there were more non-combatants than combatants in the Jiri Mountains. I did not become a guerrilla but was assigned the task of publishing newspaper at the propaganda department of the South Kyongsang Provincial Party Committee.

Directed by the organizing committee of the provincial Party committee the newspaper began to come out. It was a mimeographed paper, not printed by a press. This was an undescribably difficult task because it had to be done in the mountains. Despite numerous difficulties we managed to obtain over 2,000 Japanese Asheda stencils of high quality and a considerable amount of white paper. We edited news columns with the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) dispatches, which we had received by wireless, and daily battle situations and results coming from city and county Party committees. The editorials and articles were written by heads of respective sections, in accordance with the plan of the editorial board. Our newspaper was a weekly.

When over 50 non-combatants, including myself, had climbed Mt. Ttokkal in Obu Sub-County, Sanchong County, the police made a surprise attack on us from all directions. At that moment Hong Phal Sip, the liaison chief, fought heroically, in command of some shock party members, in order to break through the enemy's tightening siege. It is said that he was

named Phal Sip (meaning 80) because he was born when his father reached the age of 80. Their heroic action saved the non-combatants, but Hong Phal Sip and several others fell in action.

Try to picture the heroic death of people who gave their lives in battle, shouting, "Long live the national reunification!" Imagine the bitter grief of the day when Hong Phal Sip, the only son of his old parents, had dedicated his youth for the country's reunification in the Jiri Mountains, leaving his old parents behind who had loved him so dearly. Our hearts were rent with grief. That day is still fresh in my memory. The image of Hong Phal Sip, who willingly made a martyr of himself to rescue over 50 non-combatants, is engraved deep in my heart.

Despite constant attack and pursuit by the enemy, we managed to put out a third issue of our paper.

The guerrilla actions in the Jiri Mountains overcame the turmoil of the early stage and entered a phase of full-fledged development. Of these actions, I must mention, first of all, the operation to recapture the Sichon marketplace which, as I remember, took place around the beginning of 1951.

The marketplace in the seat of Sichon Sub-County, Sanchong County, was at the entrance to Korumi Valley leading to Sesok tableland. Being near the Jiri Mountains, it was an important strategic point both for us and the enemy.

Therefore it was decided to dispatch ace fighters for the action—soldiers of the "Whistle unit". They earned the name because the commander of the unit gave orders to his men by blowing a whistle when bullets rained around them.

The most difficult phase of the operation that would cause us great casualties would be when stopping the gunfire from a pillbox. Therefore, a death-defying corps was formed. One of the sub-teams of the corps consisted of a boy named Kil Thaek, and a girl Kim Jong Ok who had volunteered to join one of our political workers' corps at the outbreak of the war while attending the Russian language faculty of the Wonsan Teacher Training College (in north Korea).

Here I would like to tell about Kil Thaek. He was an orphan whose father, mother, cousins and their sons had been killed by the enemy. He narrowly escaped death from his house that was in flames. He went to live at his uncle's place. There he heard the news of the outbreak of the war, and came to the mountains when the People's Army began to withdraw from the front line. He fought as a shock trooper in all actions. That night the battle began when our trench-mortar unit started to fire as a signal. The members of the death-defying corps crawled up towards the pillbox through a shower of bullets; they could not tend to the comrades who fell in action. All of a sudden, Kil Thaek collapsed with an agonized cry. Kim Jong Ok embraced him. Blood gushed out of his side. She tore off a piece from her clothes and bandaged the wound. "Stay here. I'll go and destroy the enemy pillbox," she said and kept crawling up. Here and there comrades fell, hit by enemy bullets, shouting, "Long live the country's reunification!" before breathing their last. The girl continued to crawl and had almost reached the pillbox when she pulled off the safety pin of a hand grenade and threw it into the pillbox.

A loud bang followed.

The pillbox ceased fire at once.

The unit that had been waiting, surged towards the police substation with militant cries. Jong Ok went back to Kil Thaek lying on the ground. The boy could not even open his mouth because of the profuse bleeding. Fortunately, a unit arrived to remove the dead, and the girl asked them to take the boy to the medical unit, before she proceeded to the appointed area of concentration.

The policemen of the substation had fled and the guns had stopped rattling. The Sichon marketplace still reeked of gunpowder. Here and there our armed propaganda teams gathered the people and spoke to them with raised voices:

“We are guerrillas fighting to drive out the aggressors and crush their stooges. Why should we shed blood like this?...”

As I calmed down after the battle and agitational work, I suddenly noticed that there had been no sound of the whistle. I found out that the “Whistle Commander,” who had given orders to his men by whistles during engagements, had been killed in action. Meanwhile I received news from the medical unit that Kil Thaek, whose side had been pierced by a bullet and whose rib had been broken, would recover in some two months.

You are mistaken if you think that guerrilla units fight every day. Studies are organized when they stay in a place of safety without engaging in any actions. At this time whole units changed into a school. Classes were formed, and what subjects would be taught and who would become the teachers was announced.

Textbooks and notebooks were distributed to the guerrillas. According to the level of their knowledge the classes were divided into higher and lower ones, and into a class for guerrillas who were to learn to read and write the mother tongue. Their enthusiasm for studies was very high. They kept their pencils and notebooks inside their caps lest they should lose them when exposed to showers of bullets in action. I cannot forget the serious look of the guerrillas who would carefully take out and dry their sweat-drenched notebooks on their return from battles.

The provincial Party committee mapped out further operations amidst this complex situation. As I remember, the next battle, the battle at Machon, also took place around 1951.

Machon was of strategic importance, located at the entrance to the valleys leading to the centre of the Jiri Mountains. The Machon police substation had many pillboxes around it. Accordingly, in order to succeed in the battle to regain this substation, it was essential to crush the pillboxes. We were to be ready to shed much blood. Jong Ok again volunteered to join the death-defying corps that was to smash the gun emplacements along with Kil Thaek. As had been planned, guerrillas had been lying in ambush by the road through which the police might come. The death-defying corps was fearlessly waiting for orders. Presently the combat signal was given.

To counter the preemptive offensive of our trench-mortar unit the enemy's heavy machine guns in the pillboxes vomited fire with mad intensity. Our soldiers climbed up amidst a rain of bullets like undying eagles and destroyed the pillboxes one by one. Many of the

heavy machine guns were silenced. Where did their courage come from, the courage they demonstrated in crawling audaciously towards the pillboxes despite the bullets being showered on them, while hearing the moans of their fallen comrades-in-arms?

I dare to say that they were ready to die for their country and people.

As the last machine gun fell silent, the attackers recaptured the police substation. In the battle an enemy bullet broke Jong Ok's leg. Though she received treatment at the medical unit, she became a cripple, walking with a tottering gait. A broken leg was a devastating blow to a guerrilla. As a result she was assigned to the wireless operators' team and arranged many newspaper scripts.

Among those who died in the battle was a girl named Sin Sun Wol. Before the war she had worked at the Riwon County (South Hamgyong Province) Committee of the Women's Union at first, and then at the Hamhung City Women's Union Committee. After the war broke out she was appointed chairwoman of the Pusan City Women's Union Committee. On her way to Pusan, the retreat had begun, so she went into the mountains in Jinju. There she worked as head of the section of culture and education of the provincial women's union committee. It was at that time that she took part in the battle for Machon as a death-defying corps member. She collapsed, hit by enemy bullets while attacking the pillbox together with other guerrillas. In the height of battle her comrades-in-arms left her and pressed on towards the enemy pillboxes. When they ran back to her after destroying the enemy pillboxes to the last one, she said in a

trembling voice and with bright eyes:

"I cannot work in such a state as I would be a burden to you. I'll blow myself up." And she pulled out the safety pin from the hand grenade in her hand.

Burying her torn body, I recalled my wife in the north. I was sure that she was also unyieldingly overcoming the ordeals of our nation. I didn't doubt it even for a moment.

One day, to our surprise, a 13-year-old boy joined us after killing a policeman in Taepo-ri, Samjang Sub-County.

I met the boy in order to write about him.

His village, Taepo-ri, was located at the foot of the Jiri Mountains, so that the villagers suffered a great deal. The police frequented the village and beat the people, young and old, saying that they had contacts with the guerrillas in the mountains. The families of guerrillas lived like frightened hares. The villagers, though reluctantly, had to serve sumptuous dinners to the police, killing pigs and chickens whenever they came. If they did not have the money, they had to borrow it to entertain the police.

That day, too, the villagers, though unwilling, had arranged a party for them. The police stood their rifles up in one corner of the room and soon became befuddled with drink. Thinking of his father who had been beaten almost to death by the police for no reason, the boy shook with rage. Disgusted at the sight of the village and neighbourhood unit bosses, who were currying favour with the policeman who had struck his father before, he became even more enraged. He grabbed one of the rifles and shot the policeman. He collapsed and the boy went off into the

mountains, the rifle in his hand. The provincial Party committee sympathized with the boy and admitted him as a guerrilla, allowing him to keep the rifle.

That is the story of our unit in the vicinity of bamboo field of the Jangdae Valley. Owing to the intensive police attack after the battle in Agyang we ran out of provisions. In spite of starving, the guerrillas made painstaking efforts to carry out their assignments.

One day we had to move swiftly to another place in face of the enemy's enveloping attack. Unfortunately, Jong Ok was bedridden with a high fever. Unable to take her with us in such a critical condition, we hid her in the bamboo field and told her:

Even if the 'punitive' troops approach, you must lie still, giving no sign of life. We'll come for you at night."

At midnight we headed for the field. We found the bamboo burned to the ground in a fire set by the "punitive" forces. Jong Ok had been burnt to ashes. Our nerves seemed to become paralyzed at the scene. This last image of poor Jong Ok is imprinted in my heart for ever.

6. A Moving Story of Those Who Rest in Frozen Land

The winter of 1951 was beginning.

Winter was the hardest season for the guerrillas.

This was because, in addition to difficulties with supplies, the “punitive” forces had begun their offensive when the trees, bare of leaves in the forest, provided no cover. The situation was uncommon that winter. The south Korean army had been actively preparing for an offensive, laying telephone lines along every mountain ridge like a cobweb, when a local organization informed us that the units at the front were likely to be called out for the annihilation of the guerrillas, taking advantage of the deadlock at the front.

To make matters worse, there was a sudden increase in the number of men suffering from fever.

The illness was serious. It was called recurrent fever. It was said to have been spread in guerrilla units by the germ bombs dropped by US airplanes in preparation for a large-scale offensive.

As expected, some time later the south Korean army began their offensive. Having mobilized a big army, they surrounded the entire Jiri Mountains.

That is when I, together with some of my comrades, took refuge in a cave on the mid-slope of the mountains.

We stayed in the cave for about ten days. As sounds of the south Korean army were no longer heard, I crept stealthily out of the cave. None of them could be seen on the mountain ridge. When I crept up, wondering if this perhaps could be some trap, I saw a girl sitting on a rock at a distance. On closer scrutiny I saw that it was Pae Suk Hwan.

She had joined the volunteers when the war broke out.

Believing that the army had raised the siege tem-

porarily, we decided to fetch the rest of the emergency rations we had buried.

Pae Suk Hwan, who volunteered to join the emergency-ration carrying team, was shot in the stomach by enemy troops lying in ambush near the place where our emergency rations were buried.

"On dying I, becoming the soil of the Motherland, will rest with the Motherland forever," she said, before drawing her last breath.

The south Korean army men on the search, moving up in a ring around the whole of the Jiri Mountains, had obviously laid ambushes here and there, waiting for guerrillas to appear.

Each of us was given an assignment and began to move towards Hadong without any provisions.

When we arrived at Janggo Hill, knee-deep in the snow across the mountains and the Chongnae Valley, the sun had sunk and darkness had fallen. I wondered where I should go. I knew that the Jinju City Party Committee was based in a cave near Sangbong. I went there. I was welcomed by the organizational department head and found that many comrades suffering from fever lay in bed.

After a while the chairwoman of the Jinju City Women's Union arrived, taking advantage of a prearranged route. The organizational department head was surprised at her sudden appearance with such a hard expression on her face as she usually looked as gentle as a woman who could cope with all the difficulties of life. She had been expected to return somewhat later, for she had gone to Jinju city to take care of some affairs. He wondered what had happened to her.

After a short silence, she began to speak.

When she had called at her friend's house on arrival in Jinju, she had met a person there who was said to have delivered himself up to the police after climbing down the mountains. Feigning ignorance of the fact, she had greeted him. But his behaviour had seemed strange. She got the idea that she must escape. She had asked the hostess where the toilet was. She had taken her coat off and hung it on a clothes rack to avoid suspicion and calmly had left the room. She had escaped through the toilet window. On her way to the mountains, she had acquired another coat. After listening to her story, the department head said that he was suspicious of the hostess, but she continued, pleading for her friend:

"She lived next door to us in a village some four kilometres away from Masan. At the vegetable season, we used to go to Masan to sell vegetables together. I was like a sister to her. She was kind-hearted and a very practical housewife who took good care of her parents-in-law, to say nothing of her husband.

"She was a reliable woman well spoken of by the villagers. By the way, misfortune fell on her peaceful family after the US army entered the land following liberation. One evening her family were eating supper, when four US soldiers burst into the house. Driving her family out of the room at the point of a rifle, one of the soldiers dragged her into another room and, stripping her naked, raped her. Another soldier kept guard with a rifle in front of the door and yet another one at the brushwood gate. After they had come at her in turns, she fainted. The family left the

village furtively, regarding it a disgrace. A few years later I met her in Jinju. Her animosity against the United States was then beyond words. How could she ever forget the disgrace while she was still alive? It is impossible that she is in collusion with the informers."

Word came from the sentry that the south Korean troops had mounted a siege and were attacking.

While looking for shelter after hurriedly moving the patients to a safe place and disposing of documents, the department head said that there was another unknown reliable cave above the lower one. The only question was who would stand guard over the lower cave. Otherwise the troops would search the vicinity thoroughly.

That was when the chairwoman said. "I will keep guard here. Go up quick. I will pretend to have taken refuge in the mountains. Don't worry about me." She strove to set us at ease with these words.

We moved quickly into the upper cave. Fearing that she might inform them of our hiding place, yielding to threats, we took up hand grenades and listened for sounds from the lower cave.

Soon we heard the troops entering the cave. It was probably an officer who shouted, "Who are you?"

"I live in Jungsani village. Farming kept me from going to Sichon. So I took refuge here."

No sooner had she spoken than we heard the man say:

"Don't lie! If you tell us where the others are hiding, I'll spare your life. Otherwise, you'll die. You bitch!" Sensing danger, she retorted sharply, "What? Haven't you parents? How dare you call me names at your mother's age? I'll kill you first and die myself."

Her words were followed by the loud explosion of a hand grenade and heart-rending cries.

After a while we heard those who survived noisily removing the dead bodies. We had experienced such a strain and shock in so short a time that we shuddered! Somewhat later all was quiet.

A comrade who had gone to scout told us that the troops had left. Going down, we found the ground be spattered liberally with blood. The Capital Divisions, which had been called out from the front and had massed around the Jiri Mountains, launched the first big offensive against the guerrillas in December 1951.

The south Korean army kept attacking in winter, but the December offensive was the largest of the kind. They climbed up in thigh-deep snow, forming a ring around the mountains with intervals of a two-arm stretch between each other, searching for guerrillas.

The provincial Party committee dispatched three liaison agents to Ssari Hill to find any of the dispersed comrades.

While looking for them in gaps among the rocks in Ssari Hill, they heard someone groaning. Going up to where the groans came from, they found Song Jung Myong lying exhausted on the ground, probably from hunger.

When he had waded in ankle-deep snow, pursued by enemy troops, his sneakers had been plastered with snow. While he lay on the ground, exhausted with hunger, his body's warmth had melted the snow on the sneakers and they became wet. But the fall in temperature at night had frozen the sneakers again. This resulted in his feet becoming frostbitten up to the ankles.

When his sneakers were removed, the frostbitten feet were of a dark colour and the part of skin the shoes had covered peeled off, too. The feet, bare of skin, were reddish, and seemed to cause him untold pain. We had no medicine with us then, so we let him dip his feet into a wash-basin filled with water and soybeans according to folk medicine. A doctor from the medical team who arrived somewhat later said on seeing his feet that they had to be amputated up to the ankle but that he couldn't operate without drugs.

It was apparent that if the feet were not amputated they would rot and that would surely lead to his death. The patient decided to have his feet amputated without drugs. The cries he uttered from the pain when the doctor sawed off his foot like a wooden block, with four or five men holding him down tightly, still ring in my ears. Since life in the mountains is tough, requiring readiness to face such hazards, it is hardly possible for a man who is not ready to risk his life to be a guerrilla.

After we returned from the patient's quarters where we carried him after the operation, a big enemy offensive started again in January, 1952. South Korean troops were crawling up to every ridge of the mountains, so we had to leave in haste.

But I couldn't leave without seeing Song Jung Myong. I went to his quarters and, looking straight at him, put a hand grenade in his hand in case the enemy approached him. The hand grenade with which he could kill himself of his own accord was the sole gift I could give him.

He, however, declined my offer and suggested giving it to others, saying that he had one. I felt sad to

leave him. Still vivid in my memory is my last glimpse of him as he told me he would kill himself on the enemy's approach and asked me to tell his wife that he had died a worthy death. If I had been a painter, I would have done his portrait in honour of his memory.

Wiping away my tears, I climbed up a high hill. Having roamed about for a few days in the snow to avoid enemy pursuit, we decided to escape through the valley leading to the Taewon Temple in Samjang Sub-County and continued to advance through the Sesok tableland. My strength was exhausted from several days of hunger. I felt like throwing myself down on the spot. But each time I rallied my wits, and found ever new strength.

Taesong Valley in Hwagae Sub-County, Hadong County, South Kyongsang Province is the deepest and widest one in the Jiri Mountains. The valley extends over 16 kilometres from Ssanggye Temple to Sesok tableland and is unusually wide with mountain ridges on both sides, stretching out fanwise.

One day when I was taking medicine for my fever, I heard shots behind me. An enemy "punitive" force was coming up on the heels of big troop.

I barely managed to hide myself among a shower of bullets and shells, between some rocks with the help of people in Taesong Valley.

When I had climbed halfway up the mountain ridge overlooking Machon I met Comrade Sim Sang Thae who was crawling down, leaving bloodstains on the snow. He shouted, "Don't climb up!"

I rushed to him and clasped him in my arms. He was bleeding badly. He gave me his pistol, saying that he would soon die anyway. After assuring him

that I would bury him in the evening, I hurriedly took refuge in the forest.

You can just about imagine how terribly painful it was to take refuge myself, and leave a dying comrade behind who had crawled down, with his stomach pierced by shell splinters, in order to save his comrade.

I continued to climb up the mountain ridge. Towards dawn, the south Korean troops started firing again. I felt something strike my knee and fell down. The ex-chairwoman of Sinan Sub-County Women's Union in Sanchong County in front of me had her leg broken. My leg bones were not injured but a bullet had pierced the muscles, exposing the knee joint, and the blood ran profusely from the wound. Comrade Jo Yong Rae bandaged it up with cloth torn from his clothes and hid me among the rocks, my consciousness dimmed from the ample bloodshed, before he went off again.

I must have lain among the rocks losing consciousness, after Jo and his comrades had departed. Then suddenly somebody shouted at me, "Don't move!" while poking at my chest with the point of his rifle. Opening my eyes, I saw a soldier of the south Korean army in front of me. That is how I was taken prisoner.

I was taken on a stretcher to Kwangju POW camp via Kurye, Sunchon and Namwon police stations.

I was arrested in January 1952 when the guerrillas on the Jiri Mountains started their fight. During the big offensive launched in Taesong Valley in January 1952 and after it almost all the 50 men from the South Kyongsang Provincial Party Committee fell in action

and the 2,000-strong unit from South Kyongsang Province dwindled to one-third of its initial strength, I was told. After January 1952 the unit had to be reorganized into a small unit. In those arduous days in spite of a reduced combat force, shortage of supplies and the enemy's reinforced offensive, I heard that those who remained on the mountains fought large and small battles continuously, taking advantage of the merits of a small unit. It was, of course, after an elapse of scores of years that I heard of their struggles. A few of the guerrillas survived and my memory of those days grew dim, so what I heard must be part of their battle news. But I will tell here the story of a battle on the Jiri Mountains which deserves attention.

But now I want to give an account of Kil Thaek's death.

He was a poor boy, his parents having been killed. So, everybody treated him very well. I always took him with me, as if he were my son.

I heard that he had become an orderly after I was captured.

One day he went to a rendezvous in Talttugi Hill to meet a man who was returning from a mission at Jinju. It took him the whole night by foot to get to the appointed spot. There, he signalled his arrival. The man was said to have snapped on a lighter. In the light Kil Thaek saw that he was in a south Korean army uniform. The strange way he clicked the lighter led Kil Thaek to the conclusion that the man had turned coat and had brought the south Korean army soldiers to surround him.

He was right. There was a rattling of locks and bullets began to fly from all directions. Kil Thaek fired

back. At this the above-mentioned man shouted, "Lie down! I'll save you at all costs." Kil Thaek replied, "I didn't know you were such a man," and collapsed after firing his last bullet.

And here is the story of another boy.

He was a 13-year-old boy who was highly spoken of by everybody on the Jiri Mountains. His name was Kang Pyong Gu.

He had grown up under the care of his father, a fruit grower. Rumour had it that he had insisted obstinately on letting his father return home when he had entered the mountains after having staged the anti-US struggle. When the war broke out and his father came back home, he was always with his father.

At the time of retreat his father had to go to the mountains again. This time the boy insisted on accompanying him and would not listen to anybody. A friend of his father told him that he couldn't go to the mountains because only Party members were permitted to do so. Pyong Gu retorted, "I'm not a Party member, but my father is one. It is nonsense to say that a son of a Party member is not allowed to go to the mountains." And he accompanied his father.

I often had occasion to read about his struggles and heroic deeds in the battle reports which were brought to me for coverage. He was a brave boy who feared no bullets, so he was always appointed an orderly in serious battles.

Carrying out his duty with credit without flinching before the enemy's big offensive launched in the winter of 1952, he was heavily wounded; a bullet hit his leg while running about under a shower of bullets in the Kochang battle and was taken to the patients'

quarters. The turncoat brought policemen there, who killed several patients and took the rest, including Pyong Gu, to the Puksang police substation. The policemen, intoxicated with victory, had a drinking bout that lasted all night. And the next morning they began their interrogations. The police chief, sitting behind his desk, told a policeman, "Let's first try to coax Kang Pyong Gu, the commander's orderly. We must get information about the base of the Hamyang County Party Committee. Go and buy some biscuits to treat him."

Soon the policeman brought Kang Pyong Gu. When he hobbled in, the police chief motioned him to a chair in front of the stove, saying, "It's cold today. Sit near the stove and warm yourself."

Pyong Gu sat and warmed himself as he was told. The police chief kindly invited him to have some cakes. Pyong Gu said, "I have loose bowels, so I'll eat them later." While pretending to shiver with the cold, he stealthily looked around. He caught sight of three hand grenades lying on the police chief's desk. They had been taken from the patients' quarters.

You swine, you'll die at my hand, he thought. He sat on calmly, feigning indifference to the hand grenades. The police chief said, "I'll send you to your mother soon. Don't worry." When the police chief asked about the whereabouts of the commander and the base of the Hamyang County Party Committee he said that he didn't know very well because he had been kept in the patients' quarters.

Pyong Gu pretended to shiver with cold, having the hand grenades in mind, but the policemen showed no signs of guarding him perhaps because

he was so young. The turncoat came in then and patted him on the shoulder, trying to set him at ease. Pyong Gu was seized with burning hatred on seeing the turncoat, but containing himself, said nothing and did not even turn to look at him. After the turncoat had left the room and when the police chief was addressing the policemen, Pyong Gu snatched up the hand grenades from the desk. Removing the safety pins, he shouted, "Hands up, you bastards!" Taken aback, the police chief trembled, holding up his hands. The other policemen pleaded for their lives. "Long live the country's reunification!" the boy shouted and the hand grenades exploded. I was deeply grieved at the news of his death. Later I composed a poem in his memory.

*Keep his memory fresh
Deep in your hearts.
He was a boy, an unknown bud in the Jiri
Mountains.
He was a young guerrilla,
Who died for the country's reunification.*

After my release from prison towards the end of 1988, I came across *The Jiri Mountains, South Army* and some other books which described the activities of the guerrillas in the Jiri Mountains. I suppose most of my comrades have read them. It is natural for those captured in the Jiri Mountains, who had been thrown into prison for over 30 years, to be curious about what people thought of the events of those days. Those who have read the above-mentioned books were indignant. So was I. I can clearly remember a dialogue that explained why we were so resentful.

The following dialogue took place when people were once forced to see the film version of *South Army*. Two young leading members of a trade union in Seoul called on our comrade Han, who had fought to the end as a guerrilla in the troop from South Kyongsang Province.

They asked him, "We have seen the film *South Army*. One question haunts us. The film shows how miserably guerrillas died of hunger in the cold after having being pursued in the mountains. What did they die for?"

He replied, "Neither the book nor the film gives a truthful answer. They describe the guerrillas as victims of fate, as victims of history. They lead readers and spectators to nihilism in this way. To this end the book was published. I was a young man in my twenties just like you when I fought arms in hand in the Jiri Mountains. I took up arms solely to set up a government run by the people, the masters of the country. The word 'people' is not used today in the south, but then the word meant the whole nation, except for the pro-Japanese elements, traitors to the nation, comprador capitalists, wicked landlords and evil religious men. Having been exploited by the Japanese imperialists, we greeted the liberation of the country with excitement. At the sight of the pro-Japanese elements who revived and bossed the show in the liberated country, with the backing of the United States, we so wanted to set up a government run by the people and to live under it. Do you understand?"

Comrade Han did not lay down his rifle even for a day until he was captured in 1954 after he had

entered the Jiri Mountains to fight in 1950, and fought to the last, braving death every day. He made this statement for the sons and daughters who had given their lives in the Jiri Mountains for their country.

7. “Send Me to Koje Island”

In January, 1952, I was captured in Taesong Valley by south Korean troops and, after three months in the Kwangju POW camp, was transferred to the detention room of the Police Department of South Jolla Province. For the first few days I was summoned frequently to the prosecutor’s room for interrogation. One day Comrade Ko Jin Hui, who was active in the guerrilla troop on Mt. Halla on Jeju Island, was brought to the detention house. An operation was being prepared on Mt. Paegun then to rescue the comrades detained in the Kwangju POW camp. Comrade Ko had slipped into the city of Kwangju on a scouting mission as part of the rescue operation, only to be arrested.

With her arrest the plan to raid the Kwangju POW camp fell through, but we detainees were very grateful to our comrades active in the mountains. One day I heard the sad news that Ko Jin Hui had committed suicide in the detention house after returning from interrogation where she had suffered brutal torture. In the depth of night she had thrown herself into the toilet hole, covering her head with her skirt. The toilet hole in the detention house of the provincial police

department was far deeper than those commonly used in farmhouses in the countryside.

We wept bitterly over the loss, over the woman who had chosen death, having failed to do her duty. And here were we, without such courage, who went on existing, bearing the intense sufferings. She died but was victorious by her death. I was detained in the POW camp in Kwangju for three months, when I identified myself as a regular People's Army man and twice emphatically requested the POW authorities to send me to the POW camp on Koje Island. But it was an emphatic request in name only. No sooner had I begun to shout "Koje Island..." in the prison to make a request than the jailers dragged me out of the cell and flogged me within an inch of my life; in their opinion we "deserved to be killed but were kept alive".

The United States was waging a "combat with communism" in the POW camps, so to speak. They particularly launched psychological warfare in the Koje POW camp to "convert" prisoners into "anti-communist prisoners". Notwithstanding, I strenuously insisted on "delivering me to the side of the north when the repatriation of prisoners of war is effected because I am a regular People's Army man." So I think it was perhaps natural that I was not sent to Koje Island.

Thus, I faced trial without being sent to Koje Island. I was sentenced to seven years' imprisonment for the hostile acts I had committed as a guerrilla, allowance being made for my being a non-combatant war correspondent. This was a rare occurrence in those days. The voice of the judge passing a death sentence became familiar to us and it was a common

thing for heavy penalty to be imposed. So, a penalty of seven years' imprisonment for me was quite good luck. But we were in no frame of mind then to realize any difference between a penalty of seven years' imprisonment and the death sentence.

Waking up in the morning, we would see corpses being removed. Death was a common occurrence.

In the Armistice Agreement, signed on July 27, 1953, it was stipulated that a political conference was to be held within three months to establish durable peace.

We all believed at the time that after the political conference all political offenders would be sent back to the north.

It was not only we who believed that. Opinions differed from prison to prison, but the jailers, no doubt, believed it. In those days at Taegu prison, for instance, political offenders were unexpectedly taken out of their cells and forced to take the sun for 5-6 hours a day. Until then they were allowed to take only a ten minutes' constitutional exercise a day, so they all looked as pale as white paper. The prison authorities made such a fuss because they feared there might be trouble on this account in case of their repatriation.

Meanwhile, the Kwangju POW camp authorities committed crass cruelty in anticipation of the prisoners' repatriation. They gathered over two hundred men sentenced to death in one place and hurriedly carried out their execution. I heard that about ten prisoners were shot twice or three times every month beginning with October 1953, and only six survived from 200 until the Geneva political conference was

held in April 1954. The authorities feared that the prisoners under sentence of death might be set free on the plea of the political conference.

One can only imagine what the prisoners felt when the prison guard, with name cards in hand, called the names of those to be executed that day.

Negotiations regarding the repatriation of prisoners of war dragged on for 18 months in the ceasefire talks. The United States persisted in the talks on "voluntary repatriation" in disregard of Article 118 of the Geneva Agreement stipulating that "with the end of active hostilities prisoners of war shall be released and repatriated without delay". At the same time, the Kojé POW camp authorities launched a campaign for the conversion of prisoners of war by screening and dividing them into "anti-communist prisoners of war" and "pro-communist prisoners of war". Resisting the forced screening, the prisoners of war fought the US guards armed with machine guns, by hurling stones at them. This led to a bloody fight in which a great number of prisoners of war lost their lives. Reading books about guerrillas, I realized that I was really fortunate to have outlived 34 years of imprisonment. At least, as long as our comrades are alive, perhaps slanderers will not have their way as they did previously.

Having been sentenced to seven years' imprisonment, I was transferred to the army prison in Taegu via Kwangju and Taejon prisons.

This army prison was situated in Tongchon, Taegu. It had formerly been a large house in an orchard owned by a Japanese. It had been made a prison for criminal offenders. The cellar for the stor-

age of apples had been turned into a “special cell” for political and “flagrant” offenders.

I was thrown into this special cell. About 50 inmates were kept there. They were beaten from morning till night. Many of the prison guards were men who had served in the Japanese Kwantung Army. Those who had arrested and killed independence champions during the Japanese imperialist rule were imprisoning and guarding our comrades in the liberated country. It was a replica of the country's reality.

Rather than thinking it shameful that they had served in the Kwantung Army, the jailers made an ostentatious display of the violence they had learned there. Therefore, discipline in the special cell was more severe than in the barracks.

Prisoners did not dare to look at the jailers. If the jailer called the name of any prisoner, he, though hungry and mortally sick, had to jump to his feet and stand at attention uttering a vigorous “Yes” like a Japanese soldier. The most ferocious of the felons was selected the chief of the cell, a sort of deputy prison guard. Of course, the cell chief acted on orders of the prison guard, but he usually went beyond his orders. Jailers, however, ignored that, regarding it harmless. The cell chief made us, over 50 detainees, sit in rows and appointed a head for each row. Of course, the row heads were ferocious felons, too. When some inmate wanted to scratch an itchy place, he had to get the row head's permission. If someone wanted to scratch, he had to report to him, saying “Row head, I feel itchy. May I scratch?” Only with the row head's permission could he scratch. Otherwise,

he was called out and given a sound beating. Therefore, the detainees had to sit still all day long. They dared not even think of leaning against the wall.

The prison cell was small, so sleeping presented a big problem to its inmates. They had to lie close to each other and alternatively in the opposite direction on the floor. It didn't matter much that the foot of one detainee touched the mouth of the man lying next to him. The prison cell was so small that if someone wanted to turn over on his right side feeling a pain in his left side, he could not budge; all the inmates had to get up and lie down again so that he could turn over.

At each meal the detainees were served a ball of rice as small as a child's fist, so they swallowed it at one gulp. The meal was so meagre that even the doctor of the prison clinic said, "If you are continuously fed with such food you will not outlive three months because of malnutrition." Indeed, all of us were reduced to skeletons in three months after confinement. Every morning we would see one or two dead bodies being carried out. Some inmates would now and then receive food sent by his family. Part of it would be pilfered by the jailers. After the shares were taken out for the cell chief and the row head, a small piece of the food remained for the prisoner himself. But he was not allowed to share it with his inmates. If he was caught sharing the food, unable to eat it alone while the others went hungry, he was given a sound beating. The corpses of dead comrades looked even more miserable because of the living hungry inmates. If a man died the cell chief did not immediately submit a report to his superior in order to get the extra meals.

He usually kept the dead body in a corner of the cell for two or three days, saying he was ill. When the dead body grew cold, lice crawled out of it and swarmed the faces of the others. We did not think of scratching itchy spots without permission. How could we dare to close the open eyes of those who had died? Two years passed in unspeakable sufferings. My survival seems like a dream to me. After I was sentenced to seven years' imprisonment I was transferred to Taegu prison and then to Mapho prison, Seoul, in 1954.

For some time after my arrival at Mapho prison I shared a cell with people I did not know but who were in a state similar to mine. Sometimes I was taken to a printshop to work, where I met some acquaintances.

There was little difference between the cell of Mapho prison and the special cell of Taegu prison. As the jailers had their spy in each cell, the prison inmates could not speak freely to one another in the cell. Even in case they went to work in the factory and met acquaintances there, they did not dare to even wink at them. They received somewhat bigger balls of rice at the factory, but they were allotted larger work loads for the day. In case they failed to finish the allotted work, they were given a sound thrashing. Old prisoners who were not accustomed to rough work were often soundly beaten for failure to do the work allotted and fell ill.

One day the guard section chief summoned me. He chattered on a great deal about the "Reds", about how they could not be tolerated. This was designed to test my mentality through my reaction. If I had feigned indifference my life in prison would have been easier.

But, lacking patience, I often could not bear such a situation. When he went so far as to say that "The north and south cannot be united just like oil and water cannot be mixed," I retorted, "Suppose an American appears here and beats me in front of you. You would feel unhappy although you couldn't say anything, wouldn't you?"

"Maybe."

"You would feel that way because you are of the same nation. Isn't that right?"

"Maybe."

"This proves that the north and the south constitute one whole. How dare you liken the north and the south of the same nation to oil and water?"

"Dear me! This man is intolerable! Hey you, send him to ward No. 5."

I was locked up in a solitary cell in ward No. 5. In Mapho prison, ward No. 5 was a special one where the "worst" political prisoners were kept. After I was thrown into the solitary cell I was not taken to the factory any more where I had worked for some days. So again I was served as small a rice ball as a child's fist. My cell was so narrow that both my hands, if stretched out, would touch the walls. It had no toilet and only a bedpan in a corner. On the back of the cell was a tiny iron-barred window covered with an iron screen. And this screen was boarded from outside. It prevented me from seeing sunlight even during the day.

It was winter and since I came from the north, I had no family who could send me underwear, nor an inmate who could offer it to me. I had to sit on the floor only in the inmate's blue uniform and the cold

penetrated my body so that I felt as if I would be frozen to death. My back was very cold. I thought that if I leaned against the quilt I would feel much better. But I could not do that because inmates were ordered to sit upright in the middle of the cells with the folded quilts placed in a corner. Feeling very cold, I thought something up. I began to save some of my drinking water and poured it to one side of the folded quilt in the corner. After a couple of days the wet part was frozen. I then called the guard pointing to the frozen part of the quilt and said, "Jailer, this corner is so damp that the quilt is quite frozen. I think the quilt should not be kept in the corner." The guard came in, looked around and then ordered me to place it in the middle of the cell. Leaning against the quilt, I felt warmer.

One day I received cooked rice and soup for lunch. I must give some explanation to readers about this so-called soup.

During the radish harvesting season the fields used to be littered with radish leaves which were cut away. The prison authorities allowed the juvenile prisoners to gather them. The uncleaned radish leaves were dumped into a corner of the kitchen. Throughout the winter they were used for soup. The soup tasted so bitter and was so dark that it looked more like some decocted herb medicine. The soup bowls were made out of American gun shells. These were so rusty that the mere sight of them could cause vomiting. Seasoning was unthinkable. Although radish-leaf soup was prepared with a little bit of salt and served in an unshapely bowl, we were so hungry that it was a pleasure to find some thick substance in it. Receiving

the soup at lunchtime that day, I found it liberally filled with radish leaves. When I picked up a lump of the substance with chopsticks, it felt rather heavy. Glancing at it on the way to my mouth, I found a rat boiled whole in it.

I was by nature afraid of rats, so I was dubbed a “rat-phobe”. I got the nickname at the end of the 1930s when I was in Tokyo, Japan. One day I had come back from school with some friends. I happened to be the first to enter the room. The moment I opened the door, a rat dropped down from a shelf.

I remember that I was so frightened that I fell down with a shriek and fainted. Female office workers of Hitachi Factory from every room flocked there. From then on they teased me, calling me a “rat-phobe”. Hence my nickname.

You can just imagine how astonished I was to see a whole rat in my soup bowl. But astonishment seems to be the lot of only those who are well fed. I nibbled at the boiled rat. One day, also at lunchtime, on receiving the soup, I glanced into the bowl in spite of myself. I saw my face reflected in the bowl by the dim light coming in from the hole in the cell door through which meals were served. I saw that my face had been reduced to the kind of a skeleton that is illustrated in a medical encyclopedia. It could not be called a man’s face. Looking at my skinny face reflected in the salty soup, I thought about those who had made me what I was. It saddened me, but I did not lament my lot. I was grieved at the divided Motherland and felt anger at those who had caused it to be divided.

When speaking of the history of prisons for political offenders in the 1950s, it is necessary to mention

Ri Yong Gi, head of the Taejon prison. I was at Mapho when he was bent on converting political offenders. I later heard from several comrades of what had happened in the Taejon prison.

In 1956, each prison instituted procedures for the ideological conversion of political offenders with the main emphasis laid on the “establishment of the outlook on the state”.

But I heard that the wicked prison head, Ri Yong Gi, had started it already before, in 1955. His ultimatum-like radio speech had signalled the start of his conversion policy. In his address to special ward No. 4 where our comrades were kept, he said. “You have two alternatives—either to commit conversion or to be carried out through the back door” (when a prison inmate was dead, his body was carried out through the back door).

Then he took away all the political prisoners’ underwear who were locked in special ward No. 4 which even the prison guards likened to Siberia. He did not authorize gifts from family members and enforced a “starvation policy”, the basic conversion policy. At mealtime the inmates were served with four spoonfuls of cooked rice and thin soup from a drum, and even that, only seven-tenths of the ration. The rest of the rice and soup were thrown away as garbage under the eyes of the hungry prisoners.

This was not all. The sound of beatings was heard from the corridor of the special ward all day long.

I heard that the prison inmates used to be covered with so much sweat, just as if they had come out of a hot bath, having undergone torture for three hours—the sufferer was made to grasp one hand

thrown over the shoulder with the other twisted behind his back and handcuffed—to torture by this method for more than 30 minutes was prohibited by law; in the prison ward they were exposed to cold remindful of that in Siberia.

In a word, they were told to choose between death from hunger or survival through conversion.

One early morning, shivering from the cold in the solitary cell of ward No. 5 in Mapho prison, I heard approaching footsteps. Soon my door was thrown open. I jumped to my feet. My guard stood in front of me.

“You’re being transferred to Pusan prison. Pack your things quick and come out!” he shouted.

We detainees were bound up tight and handcuffed. Then we were taken away in a truck. While waiting for the train at Seoul Railway Station, we were closely surrounded by scores of policemen with rifles on their shoulders. We were not allowed to talk to each other. When we attempted to look around, we were shouted at, “Don’t look around!” I wondered what use swearing at us, living corpses worn down to skeletons was, who were in no position to do anything. Some 40-50 policemen surrounded us, as usual, at every railway station on the way. Nevertheless, I stealthily looked out of the window. The outside seemed a different world. This was probably because I had been so long in a dark cell with no sunlight coming in.

We arrived at Pusan in the night. Then we were taken to Pusan prison in a truck. They put us in cells, one by one. These were solitary cells in prison ward No. 3. I was placed in cell No.10.

Shivering with the cold, I looked at the quilt. I felt like vomiting when I saw the dirty, stinking quilt plastered with bloody pus. But I had no choice but to sleep under it. Afterwards, I learned that my cell was exclusively kept for lepers. Hearing the news that we were arriving, the jail authorities had them moved to another ward to take us in.

8. Weathering Raging Storms

Time rushed by like flowing water and on January 27, 1959, I was released from jail after seven years of servitude. Yet it had little appeal to me.

Many a comrade who had fought to liberate the country under the Japanese imperialist rule and who had struggled in the south when the war broke out after the country was divided lamentably went to the north. But the majority of the comrades who continued their activities in the south were killed or arrested. The number of political prisoners who were detained in the POW camps and prisons after the ceasefire must have roughly surpassed tens of thousands, I think. In the hell of postwar lawlessness countless people were massacred and frozen or starved to death. I wondered how many people walked out of a prison gate alive like me, after enduring a short-term penal servitude. In the 1950s one out of 200 or 300 political prisoners escaped death in prison. The day came when I left the prison. My heart was heavy at the thought of my comrades. Needless to say that I

had no clothes to change into. Unable to hurl me out without clothes, the prison authorities gave me some, with the stripes dyed black. Looking like a beggar and a convicted person, I trudged along the strange Pusan streets, and after many inquiries, managed to get to the judicial protection society. It accommodated ex-convicts such as robbers, thieves and swindlers who had no family to rely on. Police surveillance was unavoidable, but living with these bad people was really unbearable. They often told perverse tales about me; it appeared that they thought that would win favour with the officials there and the police. They did not hesitate to tell a lie, if they thought it necessary to attract the attention of the police.

The protection society was little different from the former in keeping me at a distance. They made arrangements for ex-robbers, thieves and hooligans to get jobs and pretended not to see the revels when they were drinking wine with money they had earned. But they were reluctant to find a job for me. When a vacancy came up at a briquette factory—people did not like to work there as it was a backbreaking job—I managed to get the job after repeated supplications.

Working from dawn to 9 o'clock at night, I was paid 400 *hwan* a day. I saved money. I quit drinking and smoked the cheapest cigarettes. My greatest hope was to get out of there and live in lodgings as fast as I could.

Afterwards, I was employed by the Yongdo Theater in Pusan under the patronage of people from my home village who were influential there. My job was the making of film ads or posters and picture boards.

I worked as best I could so that I would not disappoint my sympathizers.

One day the chief manager called me and said: "From now on you'll be the head of the propaganda section. I hope you will work harder." This promotion increased my pay. But as I had no intention of working for long at the theater, I had to save as much money as I could for the future.

The spring of 1960 overwhelmed me with the fervor of the April 19 uprising. But the hoarse cries, "Let's go to the north! Come to the south!" were only a passing thrill. The spring of 1961 raised the maddening hurricane of the May 16 coup. The wind blew straight against me.

One June day in 1961, an old friend of mine suddenly appeared. Saying that although he could not give a detailed account, he was in urgent need of money and asked me to lend him two million *hwan*. I didn't know what was what, but I knew that he was an honest man and, moreover, I could not refuse his request when I had the means. So I gave him the whole sum of money I had, not asking any questions. At the time I had about 1.5 million *hwan* which was a fairly large sum.

But who could have imagined that this would be a noose for me again. A few days later I was taken from the judicial protection society. At the police station I saw written evidence already prepared in which I was charged with having offered funds to an underground party organization.

People said that the prison atmosphere was very mild for a year or so under the impact of the April 19 uprising.

But the May 16 coup chilled the air of the prison. The cases of appeal, of those on sick bail and even the people whose written evidences had been considered too negligible previously to start a lawsuit, were all thrown into custody. The cells were virtually bursting with political prisoners.

It didn't take long to try me, as I was charged with giving money to an underground party organization. And 15 years of penal servitude was meted out to me when I was 46. In other words, I was to stay behind bars until I reached 60 years of age.

In August 1961, immediately after the May 16 coup over 780 unconverted Leftist prisoners were transferred to the Taejon prison. I was one of them.

As more than 780 people were brought to the special ward of the Taejon reformatory (from January 1, 1962, the prison was renamed a "reformatory"), they were short of cells although they wanted to keep us separately. So 4 or 5 people were put in every cell, except in extraordinary cases. The loudspeaker of the special ward aired stock phrases every day, "Anti-communism is No. 1 state policy...." The Supreme Council for National Reconstruction, which could not rest content with the "National Security Law," went to the length of fabricating an anti-communist act.

Having jammed the unconverted Leftist prisoners into the special wards of the Taejon reformatory, the military junta resorted to all kinds of outrage.

First, in addition to the walls of the reformatory, they encircled the special ward with new walls reinforced with machine-gun-installed watchtowers at the three corners of the walls.

Our special wards Nos. 4, 5, and 6 were inside the

walls. Each building had about 30 cells on both sides of the corridor. Ward No. 4 had 76 cells. In winter the walls of the cells were thick with frost so that we had to scratch it off with a dustpan into the chamber pot throughout the winter.

As anti-communism was being stepped up by the military junta, the warders seemed to emulate each other in bullying the political prisoners. Apparently they thought that this was a way to obtain promotion. They would snatch our underwear and sometimes even the blankets from us, delighted at us shivering in the frost-covered cells. And they would jeer at us the next morning, saying; "Hullo, number so and so! Weren't you frozen to death last night?"

The rice ball was no bigger than the prison ration of four spoonfuls in the 1950s.

Our rubber shoes were now used in place of soup plates. Tin cans were formerly given for plates but they grew rusty. If we received soup in one, we had to eat the soup with rust. To people sitting up all day long in a sunless, chilly cell, physical exercise was a problem directly affecting our lives. The cold, the starvation and the lack of physical exercise were draining the blood of over 780 comrades in the Taejon special ward with each passing day.

But what was most inhuman in the oppressive steps taken by the Pak Jong Hui "government" was that the unconverted prisoners were not permitted to meet their families after they had been transferred to the Taejon prison in 1961.

At the time the head of the Taejon prison was Yun Pyong Hui, who had committed every evil act imaginable as chief warder under the Japanese imperialist

rule. At his order the prison officers did not allow interviews. Even an 80-year-old mother, who had travelled a long way from a remote village, was not allowed to meet her son. On the contrary, they sought to set the families and inmates at odds, saying that "if he abandons his idea he would be set free right now. But he is so stubborn. However, he won't convert himself. He is a worthless son who is getting his parents, his wife and children into trouble." And, intending to torture our comrades psychologically they recorded the words of their families who were asking for interviews and hurled the notes into the cell of the comrades who had no idea of what had occurred outside. Sometimes they tape-recorded even the shrill wails of the families and aired them through the loudspeaker of the special ward.

Nevertheless Yun Pyong Hui was unsuccessful in his endeavours to convert the political inmates by planting seeds of discord between parents and children or between husbands and wives. Later I had it by hearsay that he had lamented, "Why are all the wives of the communists such virtuous, dutiful women?"

The military "government" instituted another order to deal with unconverted Leftist inmates. That was in 1962 when warders were called special prison officers.

Most of them were in that line from the days of the Japanese imperialist rule or were ex-Japanese police and former Kwantung Army men and became warders after the national liberation. Since the job was looked down upon publicly and the pay was not much either, it was mainly poor scholars who had

trained at the lowest of the Japanese fascist system who took the jobs in the prisons.

The military “government”, while tormenting us in the special ward physically and mentally, was planning to appease us by employing educated prison officers. In this way the prison officers who would take care of the special ward were “chosen” with particular care. The job shortage in the 1960s caused a deluge of educated applicants for a prison officer in south Korea. As a result, university graduate and even ex-Lt. Col. prison officers appeared. Of course, passionate anti-communists were the first to obtain the job.

Many of them were surprised at the dreary appearance of the Taejon special ward and wondered what they had to do in such a place.

In winter it was like an icebox and in summer it resembled a sauna. They seemed to have been greatly shocked at seeing our comrades there.

Looking into every cell through the peephole to see what was happening, they found the “Reds” reading books without paying any attention to outsiders.

Later I was told by one prison officer that he was deeply impressed at the sight.

Although they were detained in the Taejon prison, our comrades resolved to make good use of this period and spent busy hours reading books in accordance with their personal plans. Since the books on social science were forbidden unconditionally, we had to choose specialities in other fields.

Diverse books were read according to a reader’s taste. They included Chinese classics, history, linguistics, medicine and mathematics.

But then, did a prisoner have a pen for solving a

mathematical problem in the cell? No. He would pull threads from his clothes and tie them to the tip of a chopstick, and this became a “brush”.

Using this “brush”, he did a sum on the floor, checking the figures he had “written” on the floor before they dried up.

Han Sok Bong is said to have become a noted calligrapher through the exercising of his handwriting. But this was an old tale. He was now working on differential and integral equations, writing figures on the floor.

Moved at the scene, a university graduate prison officer said:

“Once I was a diligent student in my university days. But you are making strenuous efforts in pursuance of your clear aim. How can I reform you?”

Our resentment was brewing against the authorities who forced us to “reform” in the Taejon special ward, inflicting physical and mental pain on us. That resentment burst out unexpectedly and developed into a big struggle in the prison in 1964. This was the so-called “March 9 struggle of great outcry” in 1964.

There were cells specially designed to punish inmates, which went by the name “mokbang”. At first they were three small cells which were rehashed into five cells with a corridor in front. The cells were terribly narrow—if you want to know how stuffy “mokbang” was, try to picture yourself crouched in a coffin with your legs bent. There was a small window on the wall but it was covered by iron bars and planks, not admitting the sunlight. This was why the cells were dubbed “mokbang,” which meant that it was as black as Indian ink.

One day Comrade Kwak Pyong Il was called out by a prison officer for alleged violation of prison rules. In the evening he was put into the “mokbang”. It seemed that having been brutally beaten during the interrogation he fainted. He was thrown into the “mokbang” in this state, but not a sound could be heard from there and we did not know if Comrade Kwak was there or not.

In the morning of March 9, the shrieking voice of the “soji”, a petty offender who took charge of cleaning the corridor, rang out, piercing the silence of the ward.

“He’s dead!”

If the “soji” hadn’t cried out at that moment, the murder of Comrade Kwak would have been covered up artfully. There was no arguing that he had been beaten to death by the interrogating officer as he had walked out of the cell in good condition the previous day. A tenseness pervaded the whole ward, when the prison officer in charge of reveille, accompanied by his men, started the roll-call in the morning.

When he inspected several cells from the direction of the entrance of ward No. 4 with its 76 cells, somebody shouted at the top of his voice:

“Tell us the cause of his death!”

In response, all the comrades in the 76 cells raised cries:

“Explain the cause of his death!”

“Long live the country’s reunification!”

After that the prison authorities handcuffed all of us and took us out, one by one, beating us in order to make us tell how we had organized the struggle of outcries and how we had communicated with each

other. From the lowest prison officer up to the head of the prison, they were unanimous in their statement: "You wretches, you ought to have died but we keep you alive though reluctantly." In their eyes we were neither human beings nor fellow countrymen but the "Reds".

In 1968 I was transferred to the Kwangju reformatory through the measure of dispersing political prisoners to different prisons. I was 50 years old by then.

When I was 30 I had run over the snow-covered Jiri Mountains with a heart burning for national reunification! The years I spent sitting alone in that hole, though groaning from hunger, physical torture and loneliness, I was happy at the thought that I would be a free man after seven years; then my heart had been full of great expectations that I could start everything afresh! Oh, what excitement! I was out of the reformatory at last, and, making efforts to become independent in economic life, I was biding my time, contemplating which path to take. And then came that bolt from the blue and pain of despair when I was again taken captive and sent to the Taejon prison, undoubtedly owing to a premeditated suppression by the Pak Jong Hui military "government". Now I was compelled to stay behind bars, bound hand and foot, deprived of any opportunity to lay even one brick for national reunification. I had no words to tell of my feelings in that abyss of despair.

As I kept sitting crouched for several days in the dark hole of "mokbang" suffering from the cold and hunger, it naturally occurred to me that I was also a human being and wasn't it better to affix my thumbprint to the open declaration of my conversion?

Then my rice ball would grow in size for a beginning, and then I would be shifted to a spacious, sunny cell and the day when I would be released from prison would come earlier.

The feeling of irritation that seized me as time flew by and I was getting old was just as strong as the instinctive desire to tear myself away from the physical pain of the moment. I badly missed the days when I had worked to my heart's content for the building of a new Motherland in Phungsan and Hungnam. The long-awaited liberation came, yet the country was divided in two. Nevertheless, I was getting old here, doing nothing to drive the foreign forces out and to reunify the country. These thoughts nearly drove me mad.

But the thick walls surrounding me did not fall back, nor did my instinctive desire to escape from physical pain. Nor the sense of social obligation to contribute my small share outside the prison to the reunification of the country. Cherishing such burning desires in my heart, I buried myself in the Taejon special ward at the age of 40 when I was full of energy, without changing sides. Why?—one may ask. I would like to point to two things indicating my destination in life. One was my comrades in the Taejon special ward and the other was my wife in my own home.

When more than 780 unconverted comrades were placed in the Taejon special ward, the prison authorities tried to detain one inmate per cell, but they were short of cells. The “mokbang” and ward No. 7 which was built later comprised holes, but generally three or four inmates were put together in a cell, with the exception of special cases. In the special ward the

inmates were shifted to other cells frequently. The aim was to prevent us from getting to know the surroundings of the ward and from coming into close contact with comrades of an adjoining cell. In the Taejon special ward, unlike in other prisons the inmates of a cell were transferred as a whole when cells were changed, so we had little opportunity to make more friends with other prisoners as cell-mates.

No matter how the prison officers tried to separate us, I chanced to see comrades at a distance, when going to a daily dozen or doing something like that. Even when the prison officer would shout, "Don't look at others!" smiling winks would flash between us. How endearing and how inspiring it was! The inexperienced could not understand this.

If you liken the love between a young man and a woman to a wonderfully blooming tree in summer, I should say the roots of a tree growing interwoven beneath the ground for thousands of years are an exact symbol of comradeship. It is not the rare occurrence when the burning attachment of a love, for which one is ready to lay down one's life, grows cool as time passes. On the contrary, a comradeship unaffected by the passage of time lasts forever regardless of whether one lives with the comrade together, whether one has not seen him or her for a long time, or whether he has died already.

Can I ever forget till the end of my days the many comrades buried in the Jiri Mountains?

The evenings at the Taejon special ward weighed on one by the oppressive silence. The walls around me were as high as precipices and loneliness had stolen in, when suddenly I heard sounds of scratching

on the wall, followed by light taps. A certain comrade might have glanced furtively at a press report in the instruction section office or overheard snatches of conversation between prison officers. Maybe somebody had picked up bits of information and my comrade in the next cell was sending me call signals avoiding the watch of the officers, hoping to inform and lend courage to his comrades. I could relay it on to a comrade in the adjoining cell in the same way. This is how the comrades become united, though the walls were laid between us.

That is how the Taejon special ward was both our “residing” place and “stage for struggle”. The aim of our struggle in prison was to continue the cries for national reunification even in the dark world of the 1960s when the ideology of anti-communism prevailed over the whole of society. In my 40-odd years I had found a way to plunge again into the work at the Taejon special ward. Where could I have turned to, on leaving the Taejon special ward, that theatre of life and struggle?

My wife living in the north was another inspiration in my life. I was a heartless husband to my wife. When newly married, I often stayed away from home because of some pressing matters: when my daughter was born she was christened by other people. As the husband I headed for the front leaving my 23-year-old wife at home after two years of marriage but did not return home after the truce. How tearfully my wife must have looked for me, making her way through the crowd of servicemen whenever KPA soldiers were back from the south and when POWs were being sent home after the war. When I thought of my

wife shedding tears at night for her husband who had not returned, I had the urge to fly home instantly.

I spent 7 years in jail when I was taken as a prisoner of war in 1952. Meanwhile as the line of truce split the territory, it became still more difficult to return home. Starting on my 15-year prison life I would converse in my thoughts with my wife in the secluded cell of the Taejon special ward.

The picture of my sobbing wife leaning against the door when I left in July 1950 was before my eyes. Sitting there alone in the cell on a still evening I would repeat what I had said to her then on bidding her farewell: Think of me as a man gone forever. You must not follow the fate of my mother in widowhood. I hope you marry a good man and lead a happy life.

After our wedding in 1948, we went to live in Hungnam. She taught music and dance at the cultural institution. She wanted a piano very much. I promised to buy it for her when we would be better off. But I failed to keep my word before I left. I sincerely hoped she would overcome her grief and marry again. It was my sincere desire to see her energetically engaged in educational work, and to see her write and sing songs for her pupils, playing the piano which she would buy with her savings. I witnessed the sorrow and tears of my mother, widowed at 18.

Wishing my wife a happy life I also came to a decision. I had done so little for my wife as a husband, therefore I thought I should prepare a last gift for her.

After our wedding ceremony in 1948 in my home village of Phungsan, we visited the Songdowon beach. Strolling along the shore, I told her I would not put my country to shame when I think of her.

It is natural that she cannot hear of me as I am in prison. To her I am a person who has dedicated his life to the struggle of national reunification. Though miraculously I survived my comrades in prison, I should like to offer my pure life, which I can boast of before the nation to the last moment of my life, as a gift to my wife. Even if my wife hears nothing of me to the end, she would not doubt the sincerity of my heart. I should like to respond to the trust she placed in me, even in a place so far away from her. This is all I can do for her. Otherwise, what have I done and what can I do for her in the future?

9. Chongju Preventive Custody House from Where One Departs Only When Dead

At the age of 50, when my hair began to turn grey, I was transferred to Kwangju reformatory where I was jailed as a prisoner of war in 1952. My thoughts turned to those days when our life hung by a thread before a military judicial officer who would declare, "The front row shall be shot, the back row imprisoned for life," years when, wakeful from hunger, I was looking forward with great hope to the day the 38th parallel would be removed and I would be sent home. What was unsolved in those days remained a national task and what I wanted to attain was still the same.

A man of 50 has a limited future. It is the age for a person to strive for the perfection of his objective rather than taking up a new job. Could I start afresh? No, I had to follow my path to the end unwaveringly.

They had built new special buildings in the Kwangju reformatory. My comrades and I were thrown into the special ward within the walls of the Kwangju reformatory.

Every hole was as large as a coffin. I remember that it was five hands and a half wide and 13 hands long. The window above the toilet stool was covered with planks. It was really unbearable to sit alone in such a dark, narrow hole.

But the water has flowed under the bridge even in this coffin-like hole.

One day in 1973 I went outside for physical exercise as usual and noticed a young man of about 20 among the prisoners. Later I learned that he had received seven years of penal servitude as a Korean student from Japan, and that his name was So Jun Sik. He also seemed to have learned that no one came to see me as I hailed from the north. At every chance, he would draw up to me and try to help me. Once a week, we hung out our blankets on the wall at the time of the daily dozen. When we were out together he would give me his blanket, sometimes with food hidden in it, avoiding the eyes of the prison guards. When he happened to go past me, he would whisper: "What do you need?" He asked me what I wanted to eat, then he would buy it when he purchased his things and send them on to me.

He had to ask the petty offender to do this who visited every cell pulling a pushcart loaded with pur-

chased goods, giving him a tip for his services so that it was not an easy job either.

I had no words to express my thanks for his assistance. As I had nothing to offer him and could do nothing for him, should I have kept receiving his help?

The rattle of the pushcart delivering goods to inmates was a torture when I was allaying my empty stomach with a barley rice ball. Cakes, bread and sweets were delivered at every cell, but the pushcart always passed my cell as I had no money to purchase anything. One afternoon, the hole in the door through which food was given was opened unexpectedly and a sack of candy was pushed in. So Jun Sik had sent it. Being so hungry, I ate it all without a second thought. The next moment I blushed for shame. Comrade So must have given the “soji” money worth ten sacks of candy. I had disposed of it before expressing any thanks to him and before asking if any other comrade was dying of hunger.

Such kind concern was displayed towards me continually by my comrades.

Sometimes a sack of bread would come to me, passed from hand to hand, stretched out through food-giving holes, unnoticed by the guards. Try to imagine the scene of many comrades boldly conveying a sack of bread from one to the other for a comrade who was hungry as he had no family who could send him anything. Having no way to repay their kindness, I was bitterly distressed while accepting it.

One day I received as many as twenty apples. How delicious they were! It was more than ten years since I had eaten one.

Having received the news belatedly that the historic North-South Joint Statement had been published on July 4, 1972, we were tearfully happy for the joint declaration made by our nation for the first time after liberation. Before long, however, it was said that Pak Jong Hui had given instructions for scrapping the joint statement to the effect that anti-communist education should be intensified and that the Leftist prisoners must be converted.

Why then had the Pak junta made redoubled efforts to reform the prisoners particularly in those days?

In 1972, more than 500 unconverted people were detained in prisons. At first they were condemned to death and in the days of the Democratic Party "government" which appeared after the April 19 uprising a capital sentence was reduced to 20 years or penal servitude for life. Accordingly, many of them saw their prison term drawing to a close around 1972.

In the morning of November 9, 1973 a responsible officer of the Kwangju prison appeared in the corridor of the special ward and declared in a loud voice:

"You will have no physical exercise beginning with today. And no medical examination is permitted. No goods will be sold. The 'Reds', who are unwilling to convert, will not see sunlight. This is our policy."

Thus the curtain rose for the oppressive campaign to force us to change sides.

Let me explain to readers in a few words what "physical exercise" in the prison was.

In strictly restricted prison life, the hour of the daily dozen was the only occasion for us getting outside. It was restricted to 30 minutes, and the guards standing

beside us strictly forbade us to talk to each other.

It is also important that we could bask in the sun at the time. Probably only a prison inmate can say what an important life-giver the sun was to a human being.

Prohibiting the purchase of goods by inmates mattered little to a penniless person like me. But in the case of family men--how painful it must have been to their families when they were not permitted to supply a sack of bread to husbands and sons in prison! Naturally the family would implore in all ways for them to give up the principle. You must know that this was also a dynamic force to bear upon our comrades.

A little later, the guards took away all our personal effects such as books, toiletry and underwear, and moved us as a whole from one cell to another. They placed 9 to 10 men in a hole as narrow as 0.8 *pyong* (2.58 square metres). We were squeezed in. The most heartless fellows chosen from among convicted gangsters and thieves were parading about the corridor wearing armbands inscribed with "Ttokbong" (meaning a mallet used to pound rice for rice cakes). In other words, they were the clubs for beating a man.

The "Ttokbong" were very influential. They even kept the keys to the cells. Formerly only the chief warder had the keys, and other prison officers were not permitted to take them. The "Ttokbong" were at liberty to drag us out of the cells. The guards never showed up. The "Ttokbong" had not only the keys of our doors but also handcuffs, clubs and ropes. They dragged us out to the corridor and beat us with the clubs.

Their cruelty did not stop at beatings, though.

Winter is chilly and lingers long in prison. It must

be more correct to say that it is winter all the year round, the three summer months as exceptions. It was November, midwinter in the prison. They made off with all the blankets our comrades had received from their families, leaving only one thin blanket to each of us. In addition, no quilt was supplied until December 16—it was given to us in winter previously—and padded clothes could not be bought in the prison since the sale of necessities was banned.

This was not all. These gangsters placed one of our comrades in a cell for three or four days, dressed only in shorts and handcuffed: naked, he was given neither blanket nor quilt. This, however, could not break his will. Then they would pull him out of the cell and assault him, pouring pulverized red pepper water into his nose. He became ill and soon died.

Furthermore, they drove us undressed to the lavatory and poured icy water over our naked bodies. Then they tied our frozen bodies up and hung us up, striking us with bats, shouting, “Will you turn over a new leaf?”

“No.” Another round of beating followed. It was a horrible sight indeed.

Meanwhile the prison authorities pushed 8 to 10 people into a 0.8-*pyong* cell in order to keep them awake all night long. Sometimes the comrades they kept in the holes, trying to vanquish them separately, were also brought there. In that case they were subjected to more bitter brutality.

In fact, it was no easy task to endure their savagery to make us renounce our principle but it was still more painful to look at the faces of subdued comrades, who were crushed by the torture. If somebody

would give up his principle the prison officers would take him to his cell to hold a “ceremony” there. There was nothing particular in the so-called ceremony, he had only to declare before his comrades, “I’ve given up my principle.”

The sight of the man who said, “I’ve given up...” before his comrades and the tears streaming down his cheeks was a pitiful one! I had a young comrade of about 25. His name was Ho Hyo Gil. He was a nice-looking, good-natured young man so that I was quite friendly with him. One day he also stood before us to declare his conversion. He was near to bursting into tears. I kept looking him in the face. “How can you behave like this?” I thought to myself. But it was really pitiful to see him walking out in tears led by the prison guard after the “conversion” ceremony, so I shouted in his wake, “Don’t cry....” That was my last word to him. A few months later, I saw him in the distance when I was out for my daily dozen. At that time, too, I saw tears rolling down his cheeks.

Back in my cell, I felt sad for days.

“You bastards, you have broken that nice young man and are tormenting him. Are you human beings?”

I was seized with rage and thought we must sincerely help our comrades. Hyo Gil, however, was taken away far beyond the reach of our sincere assistance.

From about November 20, they entered the second round of their oppressive campaign to force unvanquished people to submit. A rack was installed in a storehouse to torture us by water.

Water torture was the chaplain’s job. They tied us

to the over one-metre-long rack and put wet cotton cloths on our faces. Then they poured water into the nose and mouth from a ten-litre kettle. Two comrades became paraplegic at that time.

In the evening of December 5, So Jun Sik attempted suicide after the torture by water, by scratching his wrist with the sharp edge of a broken glass. At dawn a guard had found him lying in a faint, the upper part of his body drenched in blood.

He seemed to have bent his body from cold in a semi-conscious state from the loss of blood. As he had put his wrist tight against his chest, shrinking from the cold, the blood had been staunched and he was saved. Frankly speaking, when the torture began, I doubted if he could endure it since he had so little experience in such a struggle. I feared to lose a fine comrade. But he had risked his life against the operation to force the prisoners to relinquish their beliefs. I blushed at my unneeded concern for him. After this incident the murderous torture was discontinued for the time being.

The rackers called us “villains” or “viper-like Reds” abusing our constancy. “The ‘Red idea’ is a horrible thought indeed”, they said, since people fought to defend it, not succumbing to unbearable physical pain.

People first writhed with pain when they were put to such brutality as the cudgeling of naked bodies half frozen with icy water, and pouring water into their nose, their bodies tied with cords. However, the wrath towards the rackers, those beasts in human skin, was more bitter than the cruelty. This was unthinkable even to hooligans who hold people for ransom. Is it

not surprising to see those in power directing a drama of such bestial outrage? A deep-rooted resentment and anger that we will never yield to these beastly creatures who do not regard us as human beings—this was the essential thing, I think, which made our comrades hold fast to their views, defying such inhuman violence. Let me ask if our comrades could be accused as being venomous men for having fought to the end to defend their dignity as human beings, defying unbearable beatings and the savage water tortures. Or the henchmen employed by the rulers were beasts who abused us wildly, beating men as savagely as they murdered beasts just because we were not at their beck and call? They were slaves of an anti-communist idea who did not see us as human beings.

There was another reason why I could never surrender to them.

The face of my wife emerged before my mind's eye at the moment when water was being poured into my nose, and my eyes were covered with cotton cloth. It was the serious glance of my wife who had looked into my eyes as I told her of my outlook on life while strolling along the Songdowon beach after our marriage. Gritting my teeth I writhed in agony because I had done nothing for her.

"I must keep my word to her.... I must endure this ordeal.... This is the only gift I can offer you. I will not give in...."

Early in 1975 I was crippled. If I had been wounded in fierce battle on the Jiri Mountains, I would have been quite happy. But unfortunately I became lame through the violence of the gangsters in prison.

It started with a trifle. In 1975 that monster, the “Public Security Law”, was made public. As it concerned us, we were quite upset by it.

During the newscast hour for petty offenders in ward No. 3 I heard reports about the “Public Security Law”. I strained my hearing but could not catch things clearly. I entered the toilet and asked the next-door inmate, “What news is that?” At that time the “soji”, a convicted muscleman in charge of cleaning the prison building and inspection of inmates, was passing my cell. He entered my cell and pulled me out. I was immediately taken to the lavatory and beaten until I fainted. When I came to, I was back in the cell. My clothes were all soaked.

Seeing that I had come to, the “soji” took me again to the instruction section. A written statement lay on the section chief’s desk stating that I had forced the next-door inmate not to give up his principle. The chief told me to affix my thumbprint to the statement unconditionally. It was clear that they were going to torment me for some months for alleged violation of regulations. I objected, and Kim Hong Ryol and many other prison officers in charge of the conversion operation fell on me, beating and kicking.

Even the so-called clergyman of the “Church of Heaven” joined in. I lost consciousness again. I came to in my cell. I could not move. I ran my hands over my body to find that a rib on my right side and one leg were broken. I lay there for about six months without any medical treatment. The broken rib set well while the leg bone joined badly, and caused a limp.

Meanwhile, as the prison chaplains used to say, “The law is in the making which would place ‘Reds’

like you unconverted gangs in the dark forever". The "Public Security Law" was proclaimed by the Pak Jong Hui regime in July 1975.

The power of the "Public Security Law" was tremendous. Many comrades who were about to start on a happy family life after finishing their 10-year and 20-year prison term were arrested overnight and entered new prison lives without trial under the appellation of "preventive custody".

Meanwhile inmates like me, who were looking forward to release on the expiration of their sentence, were put to terrible torture to convert us in the prison. Every time an inmate was dragged out to the instruction section office he was tied with cords, kicked and beaten by the prison chaplain and officers. He was set free only when he had fainted at least twice. Sending him back to his cell, they made him crawl there on his hands and knees, cudgelling or kicking him on the way.

There were comrades also who caught serious diseases during their long prison lives. They had to take medicine every day. But the prison officials went so far as to snatch even the medicine sent to a comrade by his family.

Once the team of prison officers in charge of conversion ordered that no medicine should be given to Comrade Choe Han Son, a pianist and graduate of the Japanese conservatoire, and a hypertensive. He asked for medicine several times, but in vain. One night in May 1976 he died in a hole, groaning pitifully for nearly half an hour. Those cursed walls of the Kwangju special ward! We could not rush to his side, though we heard him groan so tearfully. Was this a

place for human residence? Were we, the residents of this place, human beings?

It was difficult to name all the pain our comrades had suffered when they were tortured to make them change sides—they were too many.

The comrades who had been put to preventive detention since they refused to convert until the expiration of their term at the Kwangju reformatory were transferred to Building No. 8 of the Taejon reformatory. I remember that the number of people detained for preventive custody who had arrived from different prisons and those who were sent there after their arrest reached 155 starting from number one.

Ward No. 8 was old-fashioned and dirty since it was built by the Japanese imperialists. Formerly there were 20 cells, later they were rebuilt into 40, a cell being less than 0.75 *pyong*.

They placed the inmates whom they thought they could convert singly in the holes from No. 1 to No. 10; and 3 to 4 people lived in the remaining cells from No. 11 to No. 40.

There was a Japanese, Kono Kishio, who served a long prison term in the Inchon reformatory. I think it was in 1976 that he was in a hole where he committed suicide by hanging himself on the window. I had no opportunity to talk to him in his lifetime. Therefore I didn't know why he had been detained for so long in a foreign country and why he had chosen death: He must have been driven to despair by that monster called "Public Security Law". Anyway I felt sad for knowing so little about him.

After his death no inmate was placed singly in a cell and even the small window for fresh air was cov-

ered up. Measures such as removing the wire net from the windows of cells in the other prison buildings were taken allegedly to suit the new conversion to reformatory from prison, although this was only a show put on for the public. On the contrary, more wire nets were added to the windows at ward No. 8. The toilet stool with the lid on it was beneath the floor in the corner of the cell. It swarmed with maggots. As for the meals, physical exercise and reading books, they were no better than in prison. These were mostly people who served out their time for over 20 years, undergoing various hardships. Nevertheless they continued to be placed under confinement little better than the prison life under the pretext of "preventive custody". What a deplorable thing! When we demanded improvement of treatment, the prison officers would say, "Be patient for a little more time. A hotel is going up in Chongju."

The so-called hotel, that was the Chongju "Preventive Custody House", was completed in November 1978. Thus 110 detainees from Taejon were moved to Chongju.

The Taejon reformatory authorities would say, "Things will get better in preventive custody house." This was only empty talk.

Even in the preventive custody house many a comrade was beaten black and blue in the underground torture room because of some insignificant fault.

Our pent-up indignation burst into a hunger strike in 1979. They retaliated mercilessly. All the prison officers and security forces of the Chongju reformatory were mobilized. They put all the inmates in irons

and perpetrated every kind of outrage against them. They had not changed at all here.

The strike brought nothing new to our lives. If anything new occurred it was that one more padlock was fixed to the door of our cell and a new wire net covered the back window additionally. Pak Jong Hui was killed in the "October 26 incident" and with the advent of the so-called "spring of Seoul", the "wind of democratization" swept society. However, the Chongju Preventive Custody House remained an independent state swayed by violence. One summer day of 1980 I had been outdoors for my daily dozen which was allowed once a day. Back in the cell, it was stuffy and sweat was pouring down my face. So I enjoyed the cool air coming in through the back window of the latrine. At that moment, the detention section chief O Ki Su, when passing my cell, saw that I was not in my place. Suddenly the prison guards entered and dragged me out to the basement without a word. They tied me up and pommelled me to a jelly. I had left my place without permission. It was a wrong thing to do.

"You bastards, are you human?"

Indignation overwhelmed my pain. I howled hoarsely, but the beating went on.

I was carried back to my cell on the back of the "soji". Though I was dizzy, I shuddered with rage. The "government" which pursues "anti-communism" as "state policy", may separate the communists from society. In order to check the spread of ideology and prevent people from being united, they rigged up the "Public Security Law" and segregated us until we die by law. Weren't they satisfied with this? Why did they

continue with such cruel measures? What on earth did they want? Did they need an open declaration of our conversion or did they want to kill us?

The smouldering anger of our comrades exploded once again on July 7 of 1980. The Kwangju Popular Uprising broke out and the martial law troops slaughtered the citizens. The situation was strained. But behind the prison walls we had no idea of it. The prison officers in combat uniform kept tormenting us in many ways but we felt there was something queer about them.

There was something fishy also about the books. We were permitted to keep more books as a result of our strong, repeated demand. Recently they cut down the number. In the morning of July 7 I heard Mr. So Jun Sik, several cells further from mine, voicing a strong protest to section chief Choe Jong Dae about the books.

"Why do you restrict the books to three? I demand the restrictions repealed."

"No. You can't have more than three."

"Why?"

Mr. So's voice rose higher. Then came Choe's shout: "Drag him out!"

Mr. So cried at the door of his cell:

"I cannot live any longer!"

Shouts rose here and there in response to him. More than 10 prison guards rushed up and, finding Comrade Hwang Yong Gap kicking the cell door, took him away, handcuffed, to the basement.

Demanding that Comrade Hwang be brought back, we declared a hunger strike. At this, the custody house officials threatened us, saying that we

should give up the strike, speaking of the Kwangju situation and martial law. They added that tanks stood in front of the prison gate. We could guess the tenseness of the situation, but could not withdraw before Hwang's return.

Up to that time three persons lived in one cell, but after the hunger strike began, they kept one person only in a cell, starting on July 11. On July 13, the seventh day of our hunger strike, the custody house dragged out one person after another, and forced them to eat. Each time four inmates were taken out to the prison office and tied to chairs. Then a hose was thrust into their throats, with their faces held up.

Originally, forcing one to eat meant pouring watery gruel into the throat through a hose. But they used to bring salty water, instead of rice gruel. They thought that as we were fasting without drinking water, the brine water would make us thirsty. When Comrades Kim Yong Song, Choe Nam Gyu, Ri Jong and So Jun Sik were taken to the custody office, Comrades Kim and Choe were given forced "meals" first.

When Comrade Choe entered the room, Comrade Kim Yong Song was breathing hard, foaming at the mouth. Comrade Choe cried, "The hose went into the windpipe, not into the gullet." Now they could no longer continue forced supply of "food".

Comrade Pyon Hyong Man, who was given forced "meals" before Comrade Kim, fainted, too, and was in a critical condition. They threw him into the basement. Already 12 or 13 comrades were throwing up leaning against the walls, and the filth covered basement. As

soon as he got to the basement, Comrade Pyon began spitting blood. Saying that his moans were heard outside, the chief prison guard cried: "Put the muffle in his mouth!" They were sent back to their cells early in the morning. No one had given Comrade Pyon any first aid till then. I don't know when and how he died. We heard no more about him except that he was dead.

While killing our comrades in this way the prison authorities staged farce. On the eve of this forced supply of "meals" I was dragged out by the prison guards again to meet custody section chief O Ki Su, and the medical section chief in the office. O Ki Su said:

"Do you know that the Martial Law Command is watching the hunger strike at the custody house with keen attention? If you refuse to take a meal today we have no alternative but to hand you over to the Martial Law Command."

Then, the medical section chief examined me and said anxiously:

"Your blood pressure is 130-230. What will become of you if you're taken to the Martial Law Command in such a condition?"

A bus was standing outside the building and the "soji" was busy carrying my things to it. Somebody was shouting:

"Send him out quickly!"

But I didn't give in. O Ki Su asked me:

"Hey, what are you going to do?"

"First you must announce that you have accepted our requests."

At his wit's end, he shouted abuses at me. Hot

with rage, I howled back at him:

“Send me if you like. The army men won’t be any worse than you are.”

O Ki Su went out for a moment and then returned. He said to the prison guard angrily:

“Send him to the Martial Law Command.”

I was taken somewhere by the bus; it was to the house of detention in the Chongju reformatory which stood next to the custody house.

There was no doubt that O Ki Su was deceiving our comrades in the preventive custody house, saying that we were being sent to the Martial Law Command.

The hunger strike in the custody house, which started on July 7, lasted 17 days. Not partaking food for 17 days was a grave struggle, a risk to the lives for our comrades who were aged and suffering from one or more diseases such as blood pressure, heart and stomach trouble. Two comrades died in the course of it and two others from sequela after the struggle was over. Bitter grief pierced our hearts on seeing off the dead. I said to myself that if I stay alive I would certainly tell the public about their death.

As we had expected, the attitude of the custody house authorities changed considerably after our hunger strike. When two more comrades died owing to the forced supply of “meals”, they feared it could cause serious trouble. They became quite generous, providing us with good blankets and replacing old mosquito nets with new ones.

However, once the hunger strike was over, the custody house authorities applied even harsher rules,

instead of taking steps to improve our conditions. It was getting chilly as winter was drawing near. They forbade us to wear towels around the neck like mufflers and to sit on the blanket spread out on the floor. Now that I had grown thinner with age, sitting upright on the wooden floor all day long was not so easy. Despite our repeated protests, the prison officers were just as tough as they had been right after May 16 coup.

These days reminded me of the revival of Pak Jong Hui's soul.

Big and small struggles for improvement of our conditions went on but without exaggeration I can say that nothing had changed until the June uprising of 1987.

After every comrade had been placed singly in a cell at the time of the hunger strike in 1980, we were detained in the holes until the preventive custody houses were closed down in 1988 to 1989.

Some people may ask if this would be better than living with many people in a narrow cell. I will relate the "pains of one living in a hole".

If a person lived there for 10 or 20 years without exchanging a word with others all day long, he would be near to forgetting what communication of warm feelings between people was like. Naturally, one's mentality withers and he becomes a sort of a fossil-man, breathing air. Quiet evenings, dreary silence reigned and I gave myself up to the flow of time dim in the boundary between today and yesterday, listening to the monotonous sound of the fluorescent lamp. Then fear gripped me suddenly.

"Oh, I'm going mad!"

However, missing the affectionate glance and kind voice of a human being was rather like hoping to enjoy luxury. Such sentimentality did not last long for merciless physical violence ensued.

In 1985, again two comrades killed themselves in protest to the torture and stepped-up campaign of the team of prison officers in charge of conversion. Comrade Ri Yong Un who was lying unconscious in his hole, beaten black and blue by the prison officers, committed suicide leaving his will behind, which said: "We must fight against and break the enemy's suppression, inspite of our being beaten to death like this. Comrades, I hope you will fight in my stead, too." He hailed from Chungchong Province and was an English language teacher at a secondary school. There is an anecdote about him. Once the prison side put an insane person in his cell in order to torture him but that man, impressed by his personality, took care of Mr. Ri. A week later, Comrade Hwang Phil Gu took his life in protest against their campaign to convert him. He wrote before his death: "You can never kill us all. Even if only one of our comrades remains alive, he will let the public know everything in detail. The people and history will not be silent."

On October 27, 1988 the prison gate was suddenly opened before me without any advance notice, just as it was before my previous arrest. They said that I was free. My prison life began at the age of 36 and ended when I was 72. As I have already written of what I felt at the time in detail, I won't repeat it. Here I should like to write a poem which I, overwhelmed with vivid emotions, recited in my mind on the train while travelling to the old folk's home of the Salvation Army

in Kwachon city, accompanied by detectives.

Coming Out of the Prison Gate

*Fortune knocks at our door once, they say.
Has fortune really come to me?*

*The gate of this place is open to the people
coming in.*

*No gate was open to those going out.
But the gate is open to the outside world.
What has happened?*

*Have the brothers and sisters
At loggerheads with each other in a divided
country
Altered their minds?
Or has the world gone mad?*

*Is this the peace
Which looks like a girl of beautiful face
Casting a beautiful smile at me?*

*A sudden flood of sunlight
Blinds my eyes in the darkness
Don't waken me, please,
Let me follow my thoughts for a moment.*

*The long, long night has passed,
The fragrant smell of social soil dizzies me.
Let me rest here,
My Motherland, my brothers and sisters.*

After me, all our comrades in the custody house were released by May 1989 and the Chongju Preventive Custody House, stained by the blood and sweat of our comrades, was finally closed down. One of our comrades summed up the years of the prison term spent by the 51 still alive comrades, who were set free at the custody house. It came to 1,590 years, an average of 29 years per person. Can it be justified if man detains others for more than 30 years simply because of differences in views and opinions? Though I am a person in case, this horrifies me.

10. A Survivor

Without knowing what it was all about, I was transferred to the old folk's home under the Salvation Army's patronage in the city of Kwachon to remain there.

My confinement in the preventive custody house was changed to restricting me in residence, so that I differed greatly from a free citizen.

I had no right to leave the administrative district where I lived without permission. When I wanted to leave it, I had to notify the competent police station and get a permit, and then report on my arrival to the police station in the district I visited. I also was to give notice to it on returning. In addition, once every three months I had to notify the police about my life. I was to report in detail whom I had met, where I had wandered and what I had done. Of course I was not

allowed to move as I pleased. I was deprived of all kinds of freedom on the grounds that "I was liable to commit a crime again". In the final analysis, it seemed to me that the visible iron chains had been changed into invisible ones.

Life in the asylum for the aged was very rough. I felt neither hunger nor the cold, but I was always ill at ease. This was ascribable partly to my unsociable character but, more important, to the fact that life here was so different from the life of the community in which I had lived together with my comrades for over 30 years.

Evading strict surveillance our comrades, though staving off hunger with 4 spoonfuls of boiled barley, watched for an opportunity during the week to send even a packet of bread to their colleagues. Their principle of life was in striking contrast to that of the people in the asylum.

Somewhat later, I learned that I was called "a foolish old newcomer" here. It seemed that I did not react when they picked a fight with me and as I gave my food to others they thought me a fool.

The old men who shared the room with me seldom stayed indoors during the day. They went sight-seeing or for diversion. My surroundings were conducive to reading the books I had wanted to so eagerly. But when I sat there with a book in my hand, the faces of many people rose before my mind's eye from among the printed pages. So many sons and daughters of the Motherland had given their lives in the mountains, prisons and houses of custody, shouting, "Long live the reunification of the Motherland!" How could I forget them though my youth had long passed in prison

during the 34 years, and I had grown grey.

Suddenly here I was out in the world and lived from day to day in bewilderment, like a fool. Time passed and the New Year had crept up unnoticed.

My mother was born in 1900, so that if she were alive she would have been 90 now. However, it was difficult to believe that she had ever existed in this world. As a widow she had been ill-fed and her youth passed by in backbreaking labour. Living with her daughter-in-law and granddaughter she had felt some joy in life, but she had even lost her posthumous son. I could well imagine her grief.

I thought of my mother and wrote a letter to her on the morning of the New Year. It was a letter which could not be sent and even if it was mailed, there would be no one to receive it. I knew that it was a mere nothing but I just had to do it. Although the letter could not be mailed, it represented my devotion to my mother. I put it aside carefully.

About a month afterwards, early in March 1989, I received a letter. As I had been released from prison after a long-term penal servitude, I did things I hadn't done for such a long time. The same could be said about receiving a letter. I looked at the envelope curiously. It was from Sin Jun Yong, a reporter of the magazine *Mal*. I opened it. It said that my letter would be appearing in the April 1989 issue of *Mal* and that if the book would be published, the reporter would visit me with a copy and remuneration.

The reporter came to see me towards the end of March. I gathered from the name and handwriting that the reporter would be a young man but, unexpectedly, the reporter turned out to be a woman just like a

girl student. She was of a rather small physique but she brought a considerably big parcel. She had brought 34 copies of *Mal*, ranging from the first number to the one published that month.

"I thought that you have not had access to newspapers for a long time and that if you read our magazine it would help you to grasp the situation. That's why I brought these."

"Many thanks for your trouble."

"I exerted myself somewhat, thinking that as you do not know *Mal* yet. It would be best for you to read and judge it for yourself."

Reporter Sin untied the parcel and gave me about a thousand sheets of paper and scores of pens.

"You came to the south originally as a reporter but I think that you couldn't discharge your duty as you were in prison. I have brought pen and paper thinking that now the time has come for you to complete your unfinished articles. In my opinion, it would be appropriate that from now on you would carefully set down the stormy events you have witnessed so far in order to fill in a historical gap, no matter if you would publish it immediately or reserve it."

Around this time, I had also had the desire to put things on record. In the light of the number of Leftist prisoners, reportedly amounting to tens of thousands immediately after the war, it might be safely said that we, 51 comrades in all, who had remained alive in the house of custody were those who had survived exclusively in their special domains of activity. I asked myself, what could I, a survivor, do for the comrades who had breathed their last, saying that if even one man would survive among them, he would testify to

the truth before history or for those who had perished in the Jiri Mountains without expressing their dying wish. Fortunately, taking the advice of the young woman who had grown up in the 1980s, I thought that “this would be a request of both history and the times”.

I accepted her word, reaffirming the request of the times for me, and the paper with gratitude.

It was reported in May, 1989 that the “Public Security Law” was abrogated but a new law called the “Security Supervision Law” came into being instead on June 16. In the “Public Security Law” the article on custody for security, in other words, punishment of confinement in the custody house was abolished and only the provisions of security supervision and restriction of one’s quarters remained. At a glance, the supervision seemed to have relaxed but that was not so. We who were liable to security supervision and restriction in our quarters were under an obligation to notify in detail and frequently about our life according to the provisions and a clause to the effect that if one violated this one would be sent to a reformatory institution was added to the law. Here, the term reformatory was used instead of custody house. That was the change in the law.

According to this law, I could not visit or meet anyone without the approval of the police detective in charge, and I had to go to him as soon as he summoned me and live only in the quarters he appointed. Anyway, the newly-promulgated “Security Supervision Law” was aimed at sending anyone who violated these provisions to a reformatory to do a prison stretch of two years, etc.

I prepared my manuscript bit by bit, beginning with the spring of 1989. I was determined to write the *Modern history of South Korea*. I had witnessed and record the devoted struggle a great number of comrades had waged. However, I had to write avoiding people's eyes, because I was under surveillance on the pretext of restriction of my dwelling place. As there still existed people who tried to isolate us from society forever, who would be desperate to prevent our history from being known to the public, it was necessary to preserve the manuscript well until the time came to publish it.

So, in the evening when my roommates came back from a visit, I would close my eyes and give rein to memories, and in the daytime, when they were out, I would inscribe them on paper.

I made slow progress in writing. At times I took it into my head belatedly while writing that I had missed some parts, but I thought it would be better to make a rough draft first and preserve it and then revise it at leisure, and hastened to finish the draft.

Towards the end of summer the draft was completed. My writing was rough in style and not smooth in sentence structure because I had not had time to examine it. But it was valuable to me.

Later, my writing was published serially from the October issue of 1989 to the January one of 1990 of *Mal* under the sub-title *Notes of a Former War Correspondent of the People's Army*. After its publication many unexpected things happened. After reading the notes many people visited me and gave me undeserved assistance. I knew that their sincerity was not for me alone but for all the comrades I had written

about. I think that the people wanted to see those deceased comrades through me, because they were dead and I was alive.

11. Waiting

The year when work had kept me busy was coming to an end. About December 20, 1990 reporter Sin of *Mal* called on me in haste. Unexpectedly, she took me to a quiet teahouse near the old folk's home and said that there was good news for me. She informed me that a Korean living in Germany had sent a letter to the magazine *Mal* after reading my notes in it, making my family known through it.

I looked at the letter but I deciphered not anything. At ordinary times I would be able to read such letters without spectacles. I saw them but I could not read them. Apparently she understood, and said:

"The writer of the letter is Sin Ok Ja, a Korean woman resident in Germany. She went to West Germany to be employed as a nurse and settled down there. There she read your notes which appeared in *Mal* and pondered on how to help you. Fortunately she visited Pyongyang to attend the Pan-National Congress last August. There she showed the *Mal* to a reporter of the *Tongil Sinbo* and begged him to find your family's whereabouts. Three months after her return to Germany she received a letter from the reporter to the effect that your wife and daughter live in Pyongyang".

Reporter Sin went on:

"I want you to write a letter to your wife. If it is published in our magazine, your wife will certainly be able to read it though belatedly."

"I will."

Unable to sit any longer, I rose, holding the letter in my hand.

Thanks to an unfamiliar woman compatriot I was able to gladly greet the New Year of 1991.

In this new year I was blessed by a well-meaning encounter with a stranger—Mr. Kim Sang Won, who now takes care of me.

When the north requested to repatriate Ri In Mo, a prisoner of war, according to the Geneva Agreement from last year, the south maintained that "He is not a prisoner of war". I think that the south was unable to admit my being a prisoner of war because if it did, it was obliged to send me home.

To those who have lived their lives with the anti-communist idea it would probably be inadmissible to send me to my native parts as long as they do not fundamentally change their sense of value adhered to through their lives. However, today fellow countrymen who had fought against each other with bayonets in hand have agreed to put an end to cold war conflicts, continued for half a century, and to go over to an epoch of conciliation and peace. What does this epoch demand of 70 million fellow countrymen?

It would be a lie if I would say that I do not want to go to Pyongyang where my wife and daughter live. Today I cannot go to my wife, only hear about her. So my anguish is greater now than it was when I heard nothing about her.

However, I have a more ardent desire than the one to go to my native parts as soon as possible. It is the true conciliation of the nation.

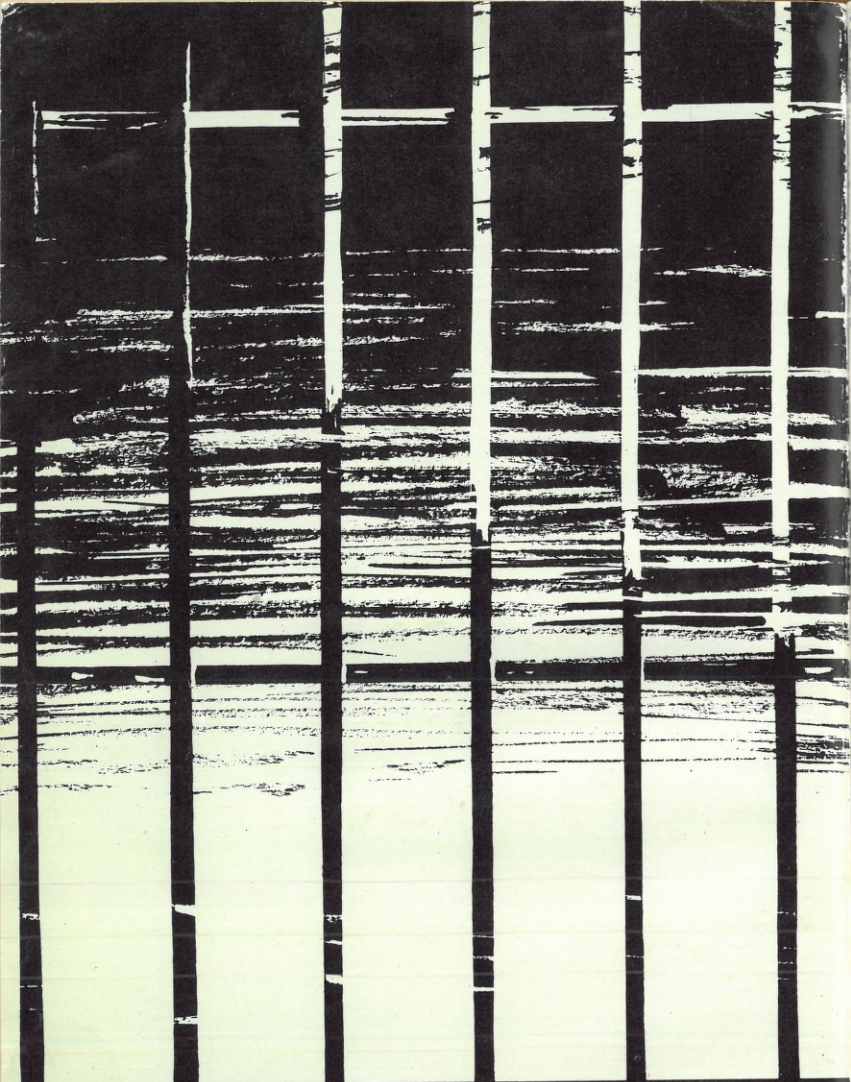
To pave an honourable way for national reunification by completely liquidating the past of confrontation and bringing about conciliation and unity between the north and the south with fraternal love—this is my last desire. Yet today, cherishing this desire I sit like a rock in a room of Mr. Kim's house, open to the south.

My hands now tremble so that I cannot write anymore. My head is losing its power to think—an aftereffect of cerebral operation I had last year.

I am so old that my hands, feet and head have become useless. I have now begun to wait in sincerity. There is a saying that sincerity moves the heavens. I—a man who is old and ailing and can do nothing but is going with his last vigour—hope that this waiting will serve as warmth to melt the barrier of division, and will continue to wait.

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